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FIRE POWER

FIVE RUTHLESS YEARS OF AIR FIGHTING HAD HAMMERED SQUADRON LEADER JOHNNIE JARVIS INTO A FLINT-HARD LEADER. BUT THE SUMMER OF 1944 WAS TO BRING HIM HIS GREATEST TEST.

A SPECIALIST IN LOW-FLYING ATTACKS, HE HAD BEEN ASSIGNED THE TOUGH JOB OF COMMANDING A ROCKET TYPHOON SQUADRON OF HARD-FIGHTING, HARD-TO-PLEASE CANADIANS.

Chapter 1. ROCKETS AWAY

FOR JOHNNIE JARVIS, THE PEACE OF THAT SUMMER MORNINGS WAS WHOLLY BELIED BY THE GATHERING STORM HE HAD LATELY DETECTED IN THE MANNER OF HIS PILOTS.

HURRY IT UP THERE, YOU CHAPS!

THEY WERE SULLEN, RESENTFUL, NURSING A GRUDGE AGAINST THEIR SQUADRON COMMANDER...

NO DOUBT THEY'D LIKE A CANADIAN FOR A LEADER, NOT AN ENGLISHMAN, AND I CAN'T SAY I BLAME THEM. BUT IT'S MORE THAN THAT...

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT GRANT SCULLY, A HARD-BITTEN TORONTO MAN, WAS THE LOUDEST IN VOICING THEIR COMPLAINTS...

IT'S CRAZY THE WAY JARVIS MAKES US FLY LOW OVER THE WATER.

YEAH! TOO OKEY BY HALP!



BUT NOT EVERY MAN SHARED GRANT SCULLY'S TRUCULENT OUTLOOK. THERE WAS "B" FLIGHT'S COMMANDER, THE GOOD-NATURED FLIGHT LIEUTENANT WESLEY GOODMAN.

AW/CAN IT, YOU GUYS/JARVIS HAS BEEN SENT TO DO A JOB-AND HE'S DOING IT!

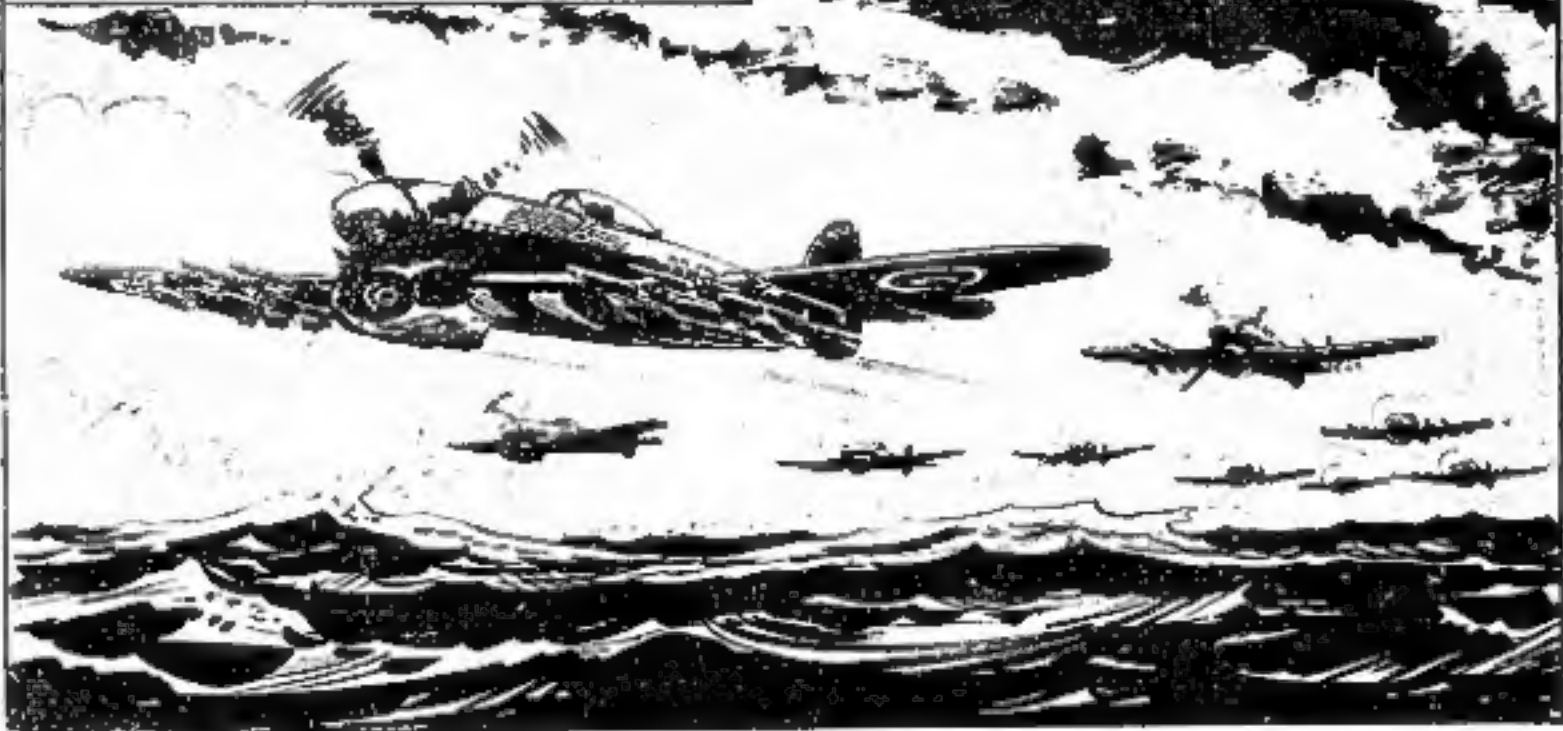


IGNORING FLIGHT LIEUTENANT SCULLY'S BLACK LOOKS, JOHNNIE LED THE SQUADRON INTO THE AIR WITH A THUNDEROUS ROAR THAT GAVE VENT TO HIS OWN SORELY-TRIED FEELINGS.

I DON'T BELIEVE IN FORCE, BUT IF THESE CANUCKS DON'T PULL WITH ME, I'LL HAVE TO USE THE BIG STICK.



THEIR TARGET WAS AN ELECTRICAL SUB-STATION NEAR ORLY IN FRANCE. ANY PILOT WOULD HAVE EXPECTED TO FLY LOW ACROSS THE CHANNEL TO ESCAPE RADAR DETECTION... BUT HARDLY AS LOW AS JOHNNIE JARVIS NOW TOOK THEM.



GOOD FLYER THOUGH HE WAS, THE STRAIN OF FLYING AT ZERO FEET FOR LONG PERIODS ALWAYS INCENSED THE QUICK-TEMPERED GRANT SCULLY...

BLAZES TAKE THAT JARVIS! YOU NEED SOME MARGIN FOR ERROR WITH THESE KITES...



BUT JOHNNIE'S THOUGHTS WERE RANGING AHEAD EVEN OF THEIR IMMEDIATE TARGET ATORLY. SOON, THEY WOULD FLY ON ANOTHER MISSION-TO A TARGET WHICH HAD NOT BEEN DIVULGED EVEN TO HIM.

WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S GOING TO BE PRETTY DODGY... ACCORDING TO GROUP. MAKE THIS SORT OF OF A PICKNIC!



THEY CROSSED THE FRENCH COAST AT 350 MPH PLUS AND WERE STREAMING INLAND BEFORE THE GERMAN DEFENCES COULD RECOVER FROM THEIR SURPRISE...



SKIMMING THE TALL POPLARS OF THE ROLLING FRENCH LANDSCAPE, JOHNNIE JARVIS BANKED ON TO A COURSE FOR THE TARGET. HE BROKE WIRELESS SILENCE...

TARGET~
DEAD AHEAD!
SEE THE
TRANSFORMERS?
LINE AHEAD~
FOLLOW
ME IN!



THE TEARAWAY HISS OF JOHNNIE'S FIRST ROCKETS WAS LOST IN A SUDDEN CRESCENDO OF FLAK WHICH SAILED UP TO MEET THE TYPHOONS.



THEY PRESSED HOME THE ATTACK THROUGH A SLEETING CURTAIN OF STEEL, BUT THERE WAS NO STOPPING THE EXPLOSIVE DESTRUCTION OF THE ROCKET PROJECTILES.



FITTED WITH A 60 LB. WARHEAD, EACH ROCKET PACKED A PUNCH THE EQUAL OF A SIX-INCH GUN. MULTIPLIED EIGHT TIMES, THE TOTAL EFFECTIVENESS OF A SINGLE TYPHOON WAS DEVASTATING.

HAVING EMPTIED ALL HIS OWN ROCKETS INTO THE LL-STARRED TARGET, JOHNNIE WATCHED THE OTHERS COMPLETE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ELECTRICAL SUB-STATION...

THESE
CANADIANS
MAY BE A
BURLY BUNCH—
BUT THEY CAN
CERTAINLY
FLY!

THE TYPHOONS TURNED EXULTANTLY FOR HOME, BUT THE CANADIANS' JOY WAS SHORT-LIVED. ONCE MORE JOHNNIE'S INSISTENT DEMANDS GRATED IN THEIR EARPHONES...

LOWER!
GET LOWER,
EVERYBODY!

HEY CAN'T
THAT GUY LET
UP FOR
ONCE!

Fire Power

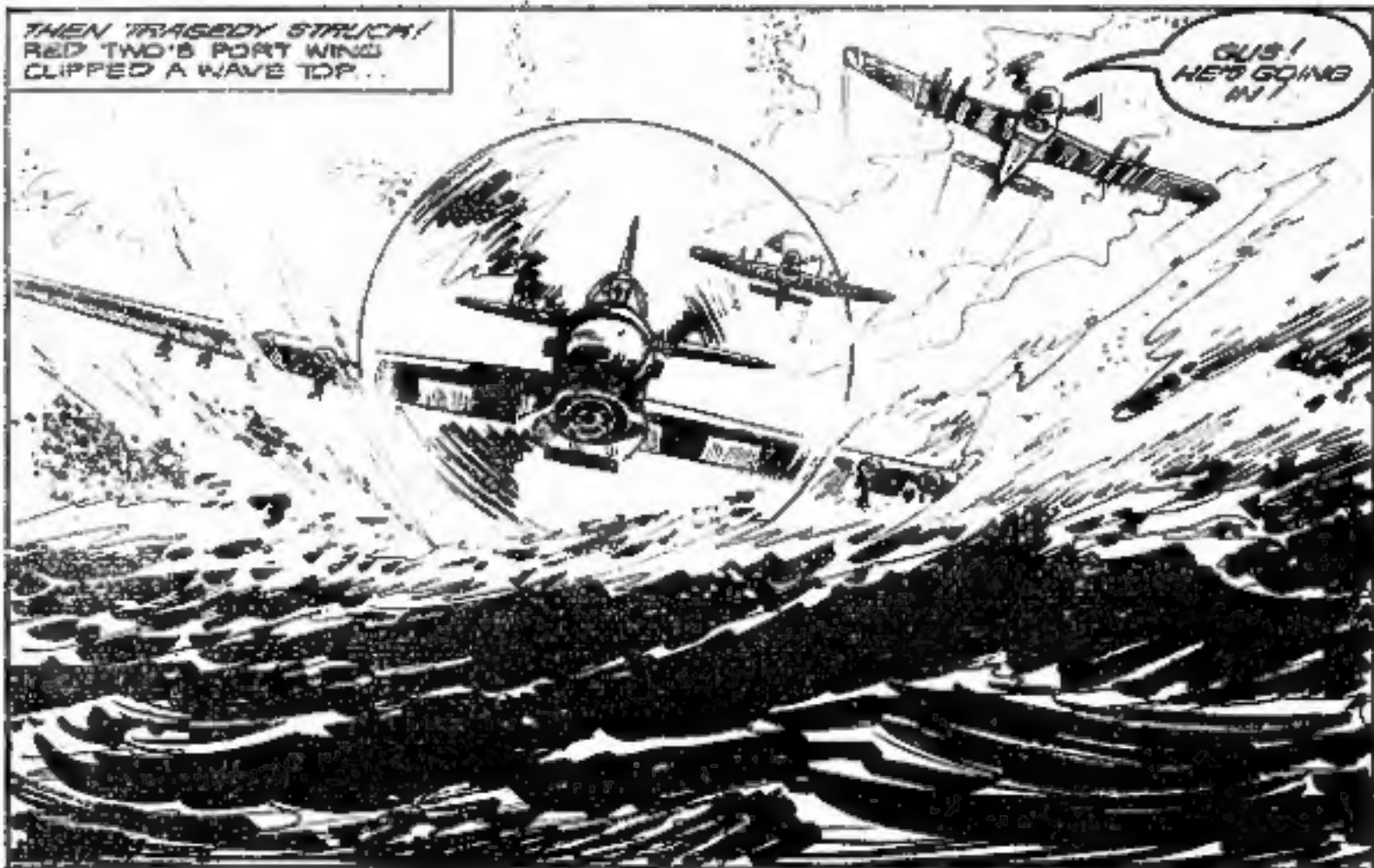
THE SLOW DRAWL OF THE MORE AMIABLE WESLEY GOODMAN BROKE IN TO GIVE JOHNNIE MUCH NEEDED SUPPORT...

DON'T YOU FELLAS EVER LEARN SENSE? THIS IS GOOD PRACTICE...SO GET LOW!

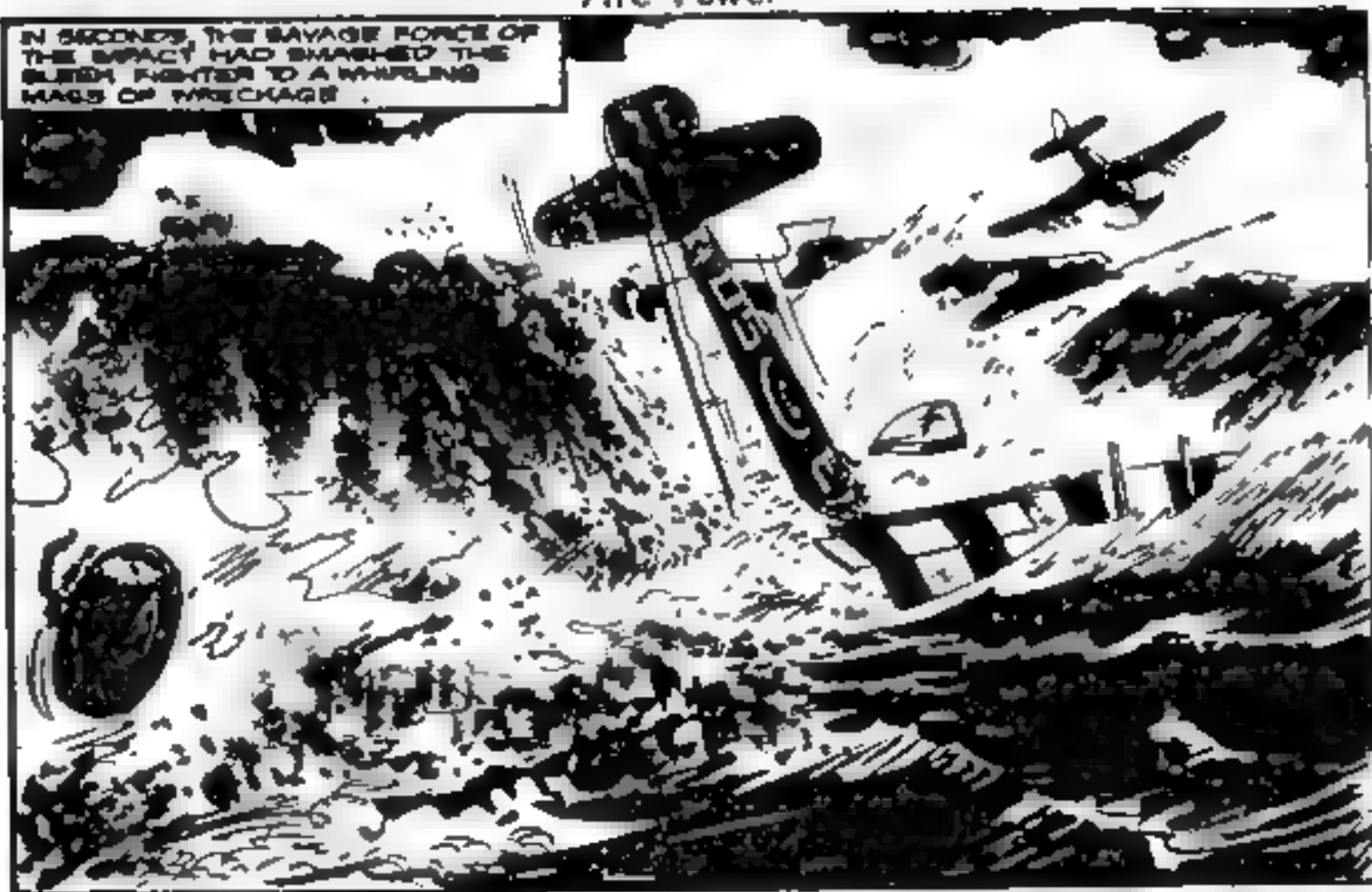


THEN TRAGEDY STRUCK!
RED TWO'S PORT WING
CLIPPED A WAVE TOP...

GUS!
HE'S GOING
IN!



IN SECONDS THE SAVAGE FORCE OF THE IMPACT HAD SMASHED THE BLEEK FIGHTER TO A WHIRLING MASS OF WRECKAGE.



THE HORRIFIED PILOTS COULD DO NOTHING BUT CIRCLE HELPLESSLY. THEIR MINDS WERE FILLED WITH A DREAD VISION OF THEIR FRIENDS' TERRIFYING END IN THOSE COLD GREEN DEPTHS.

GOOD GRIEF / HE HAS GONE IN A SECOND!

DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE!



WHEN THEY REACHED BASE JOHNNIE FOUND HIMSELF THE STORM-CENTRE OF BITTER ACCUSATIONS.

YOU AS GOOD AS KILLED GUS BAKER, JARVIS / THE OP WAS OVER - WHY RISK OUR NECKS ON DARN FOOL UNNECESSARY LOW FLYING! IT WERE PLAIN MURDER!!



DESPITE THE SHOCK OF THE LOSS JOHNNIE FELT HIS OWN ANGER MOUNTING WITHIN HIM BUT ONCE AGAIN, THE SOOTHING DRAGL OF WESLEY GOODMAN CUT IN.

THAT'S STUPID TALK, GRANT / LOW FLYING IS OUR BUSINESS - IT SAVES OUR NECKS / ALL THE MORE REASON THAT WE SHOULD PRACTISE ALL WE CAN.



YOU'LL BE GLAD OF EVERY BIT OF LOW FLYING PRACTICE YOU CAN GET BEFORE LONG I CAN'T SAY MORE...

WITH TEMPERE BARELY COOLING THE CANADIANS MADE OFF TO THE MESS AS JOHNNIE FOLLOWED, HE FOUND WESLEY GOODMAN STILL DESOES HIM

TAKE NO NOTICE OF THEM, JOHNNIE GUS HAS BEEN WITH US A LONG TIME THEY DON'T LIKE SEEING HIM GO THAT WAY IT SEEMS A PITY THE BOYS CAN'T BE TOLD THIS SPECIAL TARGET YOU HINTED AT MIGHT MAKE THINGS KINDA EASIER.

NOT A CHANCE, WES. A LEAK MIGHT WARN THE ENEMY JUST HOW NEAR THE INVASION IS.



LOW-LEVEL ATTACK WORK WAS ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS JOBS OF THE FLYING WAR JOHNNIE COULD UNDERSTAND WHY THESE MEN RESENTED ANY SEEMINGLY UNNECESSARY RISKS...

THEY'RE A TOUGH MOB... BUT IT'S A TOUGH JOB WHATEVER THIS MISSION IS, IF IT CAN BE DONE, THESE BOYS WILL DO IT!



Chapter 2.

TENSION MOUNTS

AFTER THAT TRAGIC INCIDENT, THERE FOLLOWED DAYS OF BARELY-CONCEALED RANCOUR. THEN CAME A CHANGE IN ROUTINE.

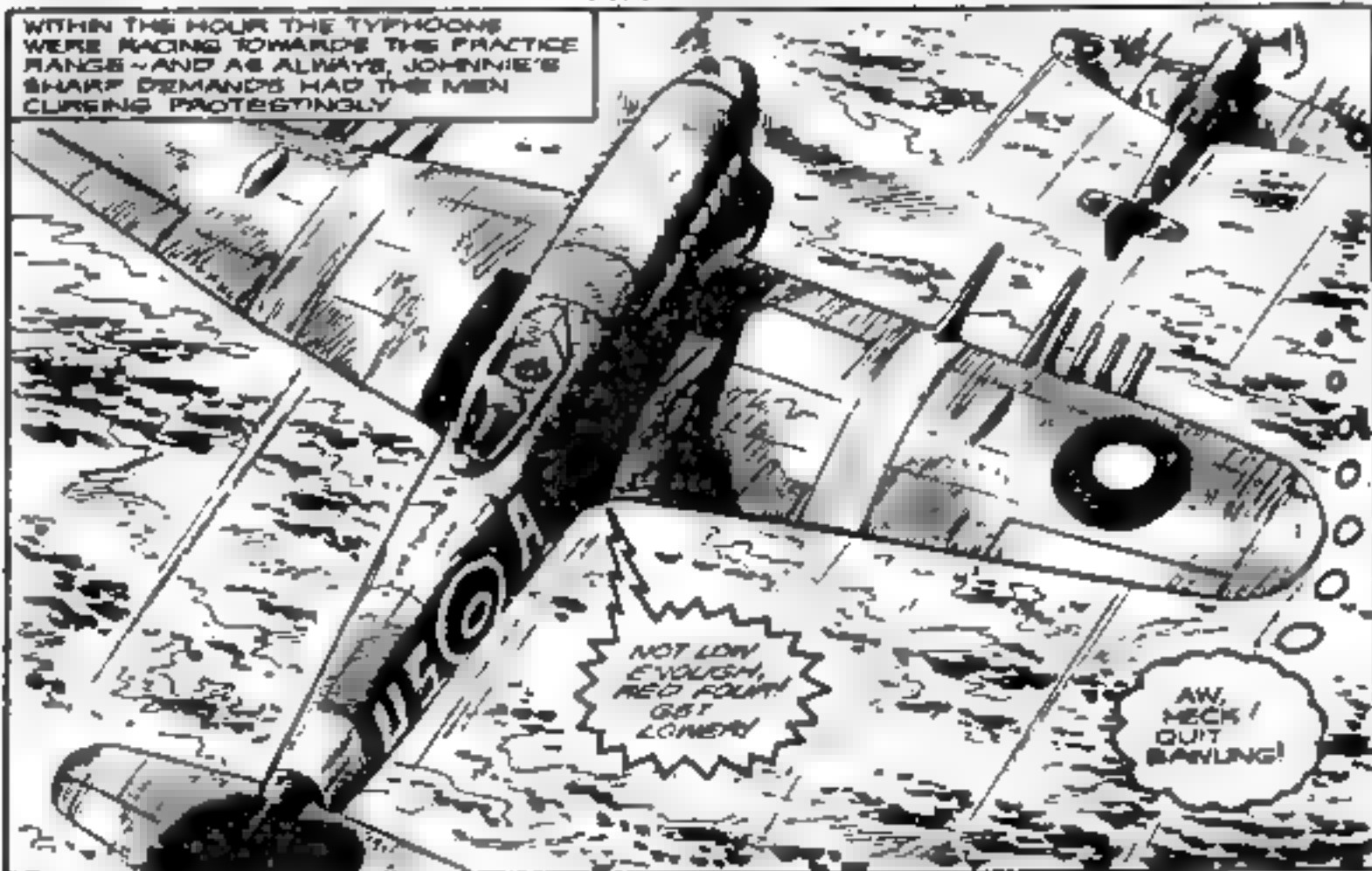


JOHNNIE JARVIS WENT ON TO DESCRIBE THE PRACTICE TARGET WHICH HE HAD ALREADY SEEN. IT WAS A HUGE STRIPED SQUARE PAINTED ON THE FACE OF A ROCKY ISLET HALF A MILE OFF THE DORSET COAST.

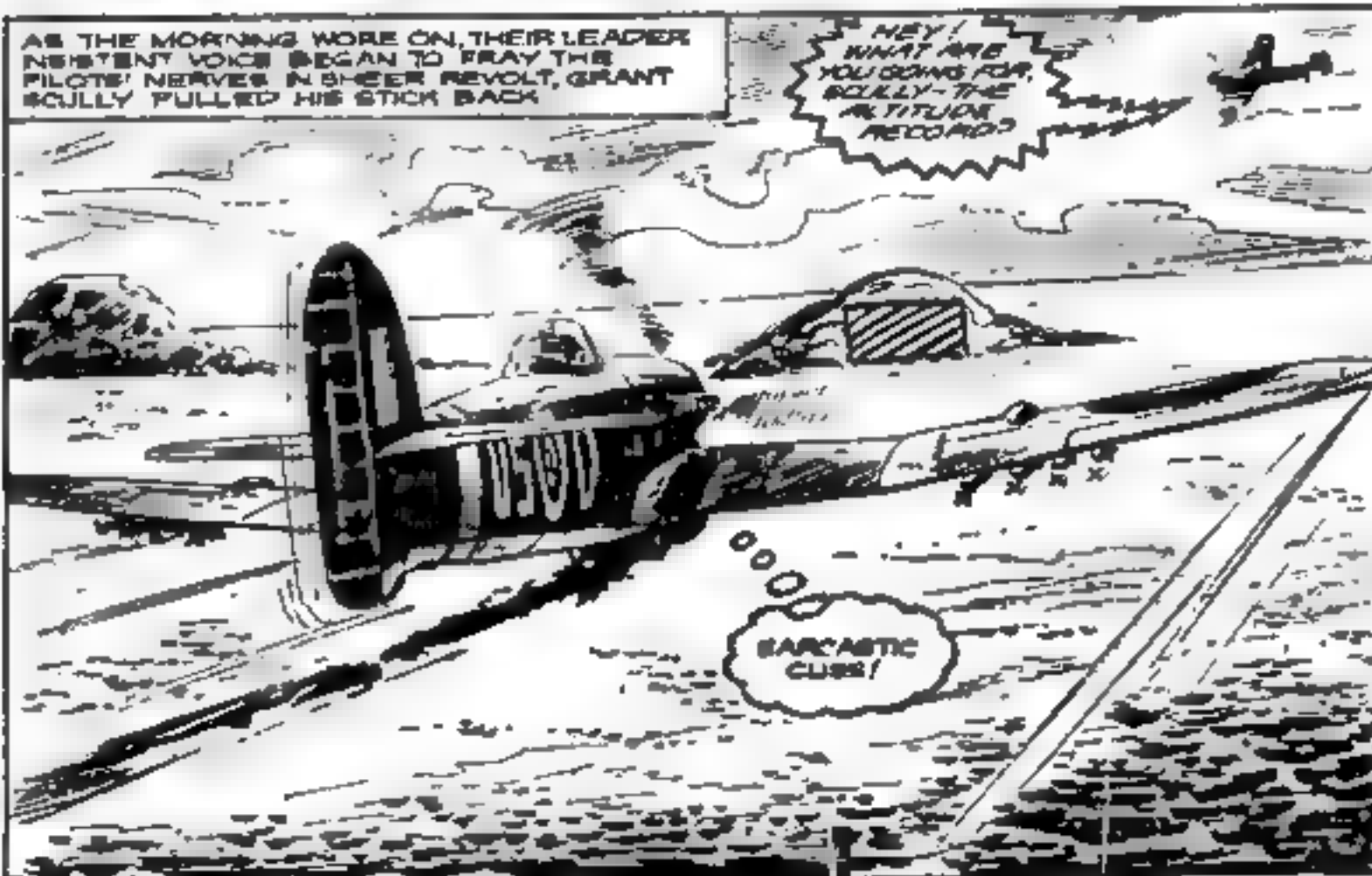


THE SIGNIFICANT FEATURE ABOUT THIS TARGET, AS JOHNNIE POINTED OUT, WAS THAT IT REACHED RIGHT DOWN TO SEA LEVEL.

WITHIN THE HOUR THE TYPHOONS WERE RACING TOWARDS THE PRACTICE RANGE - AND AS ALWAYS, JOHNNIE'S SHARP DEMANDS HAD THE MEN CURING PROTESTINGLY



AS THE MORNING WORE ON, THEIR LEADER'S INSISTENT VOICE BEGAN TO FRAY THE PILOTS' NERVES. IN SHEER REVOLT, GRANT SCULLY PULLED HIS STICK BACK



SCULLY SNARLED INTO HIS MICROPHONE IN A FIT OF SUDDEN ANGER.



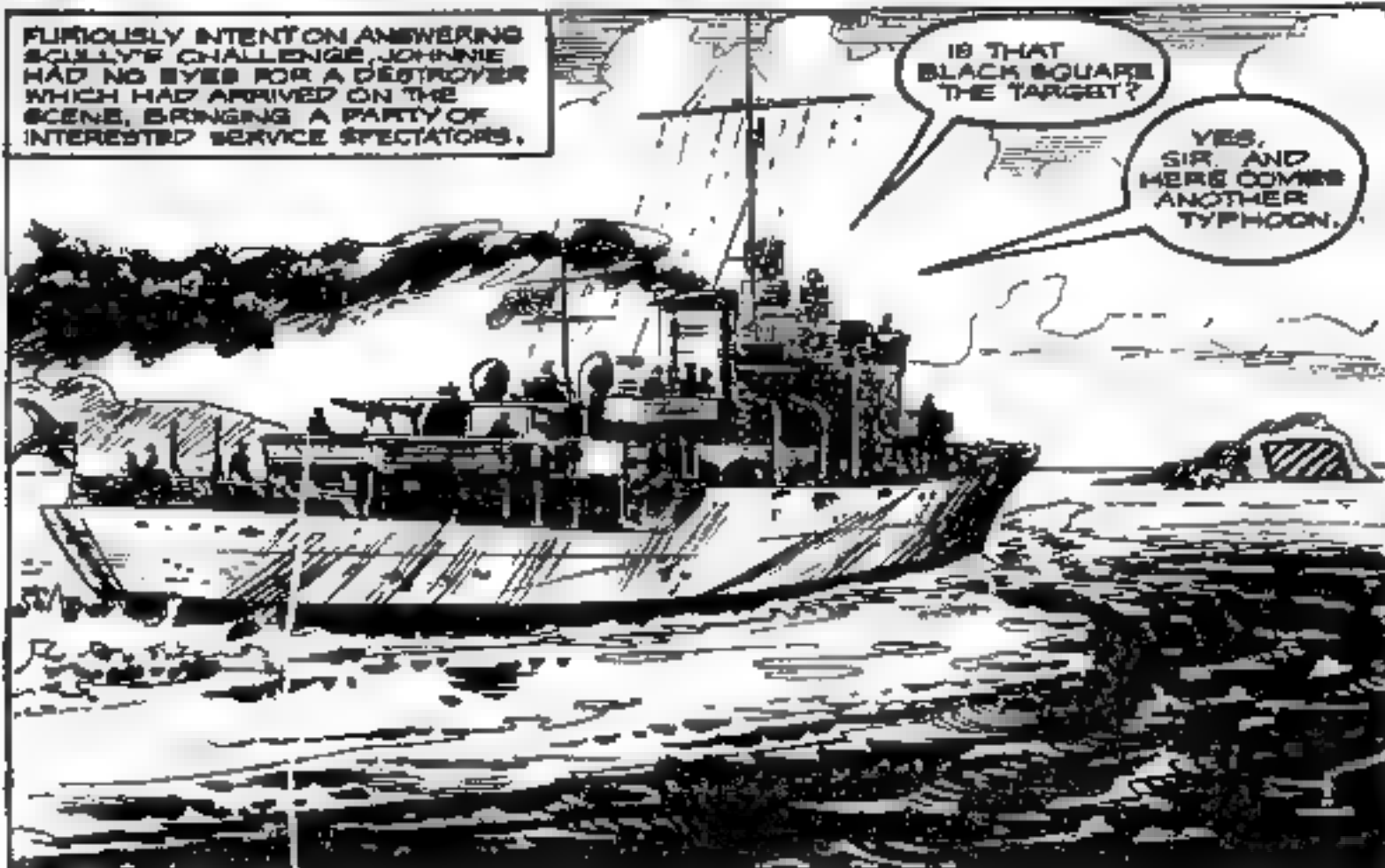
WHY DON'T
YOU COME DOWN
AND SHOW US
INSTEAD OF
STICKING UP THERE,
MACE AND
BARK!

JOHNNIE'S
REACTION WAS
INSTANTANEOUS.

RIGHT,
BY GLORY,
I'LL SHOW
THE LOT
OF YOU!



FURIOUSLY INTENT ON ANSWERING SCULLY'S CHALLENGE, JOHNNIE HAD NO EYES FOR A DESTROYER WHICH HAD ARRIVED ON THE SCENE, BRINGING A PARTY OF INTERESTED SERVICE SPECTATORS.



IS THAT
BLACK SQUARE
THE TARGET?

YES,
SIR, AND
HERE COMES
ANOTHER
TYPHOON.

UNNOTICED, THE DESTROYER'S
BOWS HAD SET UP A
RIPPLING WAVE WHICH CRESTED
ACROSS JOHNNIE'S WATER-
FLAT APPROACH TO THE
TARGET

I'LL SHOW
SCULLY AND
CO JUST
WHAT ZERO
FLYING
REALLY IS!



TOO LATE, JOHNNIE SAW
THE MOVING WALL OF
WATER IN HIS PATH

GOOD
BYE!



JOHNS WAS FLUNG
VIOLENTLY FORWARD
IN HIS HARNESS AS
THE TYPHOON'S HEAVY
NOSE PLOUGHED
INTO THE SEA.



NEXT MOMENT THE ROARING
WATERS CLOSED OVER THE
COCKPIT AS THE PLANE
PLUNGED BENEATH THE
SURFACE FRANTICALLY
JOHNS STRUGGLED TO
FREE HIMSELF



WITH THE BRUTE FORCE OF PANIC HE FORCED THE COCKPIT COVER OPEN, THEN FOUND HIMSELF CAUGHT BY HIS PARACHUTE HARNESS HE THUMPED DESPERATELY AT THE CENTRAL CATCH AND THE STRAPS FLEW APART.



HIS HEAD REELING FROM LACK OF AIR, JOHNNIE FOUGHT HIS WAY UPWARDS.



AFTER WHAT SEEMED AN ETERNITY HE BROKE SURFACE, HIS LUNGS GASPING AGONISINGLY FOR LIFE-GIVING AIR.



THE DESTROYER'S COMMANDER HAD ACTED SWIFTLY. ALREADY, THE SHIP'S WHA ER WAS RACING TO THE SCENE, AND JOHNNIE WAS HALLED FROM THE SEA BY WILLING HANDS.

RIGHT, LIE HIM FLAT AND GET THE WATER OUT OF HIS LUNGS!

AYE, AYE, SIR.



JOHNNIE WAS CARRIED BACK TO STATION SICK-QUARTERS, BUT NO ADVICE OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER COULD KEEP HIM THERE. IT WAS TYPICAL OF WESLEY GOODMAN TO BE THE FIRST TO GREET THE SQUADRON LEADER'S REAPPEARANCE...

HOW ARE YOU, SHIPPER? BY GOLLY, YOU MUST BE THE IRON MAN HIMSELF!

F.

HOSPITAL



I FEEL OKAY, WES. LET'S GET BACK TO WORK!

IF THE REST OF THE SQUADRON FELT ANY SYMPATHY, THEIR FACES DID NOT SHOW IT. WESLEY GOODMAN HAD A QUICK WORD WITH HIS LEADER...

DON'T MIND THE BOYS TOO MUCH, SM PFER. THEY RECKON YOUR ACCIDENT IS JUST ANOTHER REASON WHY THEY SHOULD QUIT THIS LOW-LEVEL FLYING.

I'LL SPEAK TO THEM.



JOHNNIE LET GRANT SCILLY HAVE HIS SAY FIRST...

SO WE GO LOW... BUT NOT SO TARNATION LOW AS TO LEAVE A MAN NO CHANCE IF HE SLIPS... LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU.

YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT, SHIP!

MAKES SENSE TO US!



LOOKING INTO THOSE HARD-BONED CANADIAN FACES, FLUSHED WITH INDIGNATION, JOHNNIE JARVIS KNEW THAT HE DARE NOT YIELD AN INCH TO HIS FLOTS...

I WISH I COULD AGREE WITH YOU. BUT I'M TOLD THAT OUR ROCKETS WILL NEVER HIT THIS SPECIAL TARGET UNLESS WE DO FLY AT WATER LEVEL.

GRANT SCULLY CAME CLOSE. HIS EYES BLACK PINPOINTS OF ANGER...

YOU MEAN YOU'LL RISK SOMEBODY ELSE DYING IT?

I MEAN JUST THAT, SCULLY!



GIVING JOHNNIE A LONG HOSTILE STARE, GRANT SCULLY SAID NO MORE BUT LED THE OTHERS AWAY THE SQUADRON LEADER WATCHED THEM GO, FILLED WITH MISGIVINGS..

IF SOMEBODY ELSE DOES BUY IT, THERE'LL BE THE DEVIL TO PAY FROM THESE CANUCKS.



THAT NIGHT, SLEEP CAME HARD TO JOHNNIE JARVIS AS HE RELIVED THOSE HORRIFYING MOMENTS OF HIS PLUNGE BENEATH THE WAVES

SCULLY'S RIGHT, ONE SLIP AND YOU'VE HAD IT!



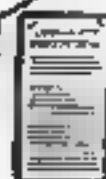
IT HAD HAPPENED SO SUDDENLY, SO EASILY HOW COULD HE DRIVE THESE MEN IN SUICIDALLY LOW-LEVEL FLYING WITH THE MEMORY OF THAT EXPERIENCE FRESH IN HIS MIND?

Chapter 3. *THIRD VICTIM*

THE NEXT DAY, RED-EYED FROM LOSS OF SLEEP, JOHNNIE JARVIS WAS CALLED TO THE BRIEFING ROOM. THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER GREETED HIM WITH AN OPERATIONAL ORDER.

IT SEEMS COMMAND ARE SWITCHING YOU BACK TO LIVE TARGETS, JOHNNIE HERE'S A PICTURE OF IT.

GOOD HEAVENS, IT LOOKS LIKE A SEASIDE PIER!



JOHNNIE WENT OVER THE DETAILS WITH THE OTHER AND THEN CALLED A BRIEFING FACING THOSE UNFRIENDLY FACES, THE SQUADRON LEADER FOUND THAT NOT EVEN THE STRANGE NATURE OF THEIR TARGET COULD RAISE A SMILE...

IT'S AN ORDINARY SEASIDE PIER BUT STRENGTHENED AND ARMED WITH A BATTERY OF TWENTY-MILLIMETRE FLAK. HERE IS A PICTURE OF IT WHICH YOU CAN ALL STUDY. THE OBJECT OF THE ATTACK IS TO PUNCH THE PIERS LOGS FROM UNDER IT.



GRIMLY, HE
PRESSED ON.

AS YOU
CAN GUESS,
THE ONLY WAY
YOU'LL DO IT
WILL BE TO GO
IN ABSOLUTELY
FLAT ON THE
WATER.

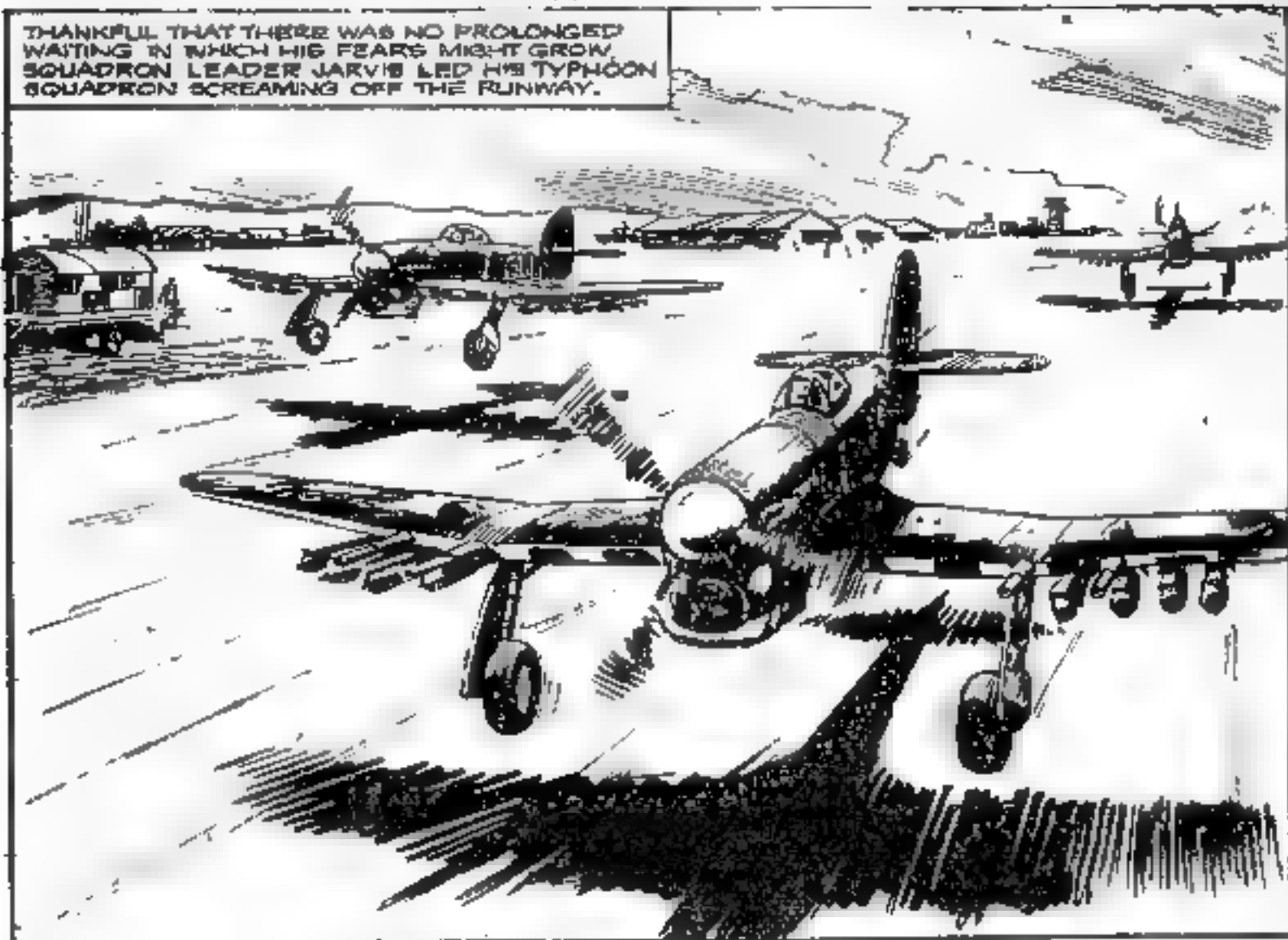


NOTHING MORE
WAS SAID AND
JOHNSON FOLLOWED
THE TIGHT-LIPPED
PILOTS OUT ON TO
THE TARMAC
WATCHING THEM
MOUNT INTO THEIR
WAITING AIRCRAFT.
HIS OWN NEW-
FOUND DREAD
CAME CROWDING
BACK...

IT'S UP TO ME TO GO IN REALLY
LOW AND SHOW THESE
BEGGARS BUT IF THE SEA'S
CHOPPY IF I JUST CLIP AN
UNLUCKY WAVE TOP.

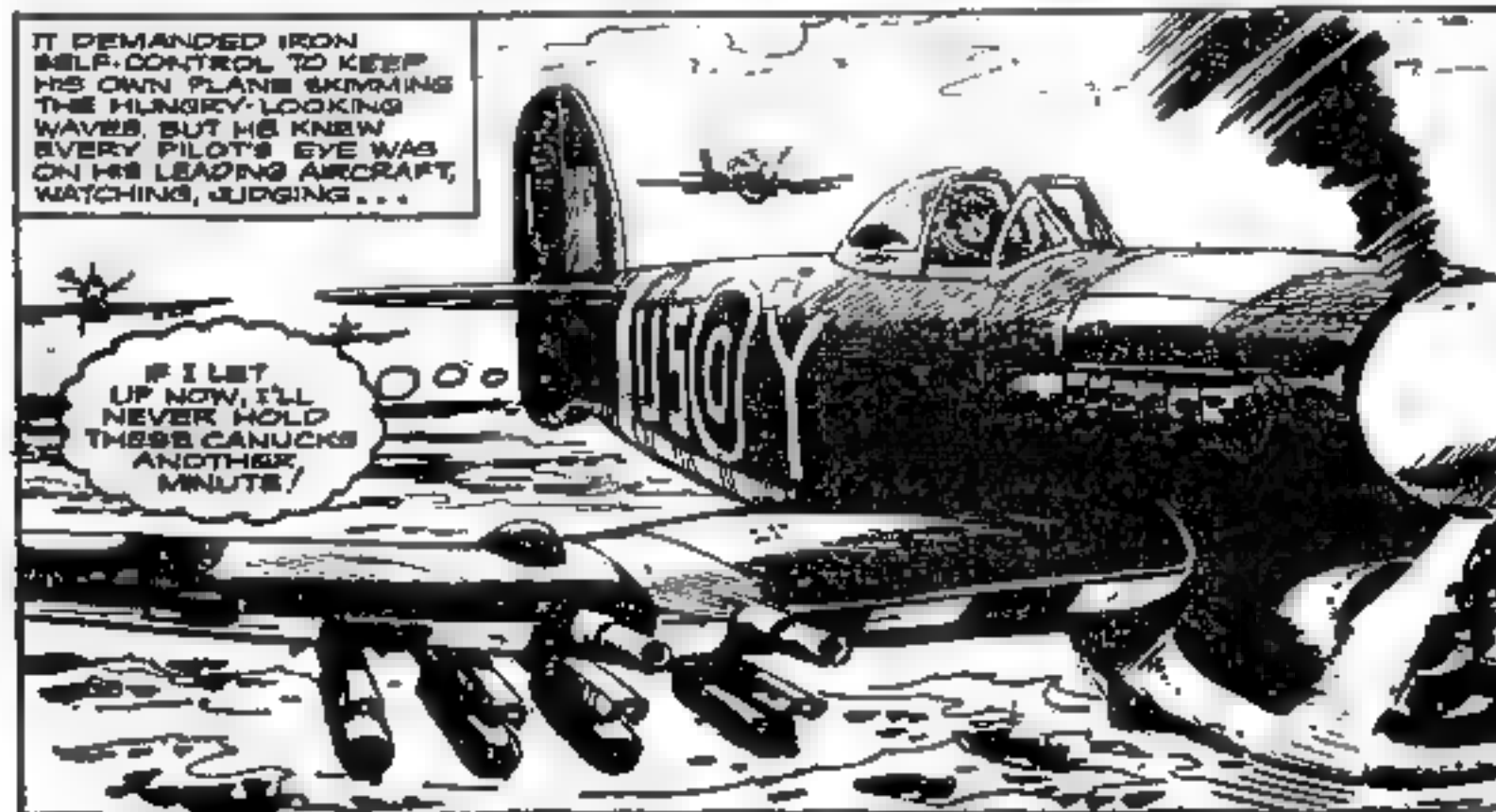


THANKFUL THAT THERE WAS NO PROLONGED WAITING IN WHICH HIS FEARS MIGHT GROW, SQUADRON LEADER JARVIS LED HIS TYPHOON SQUADRON SCREAMING OFF THE RUNWAY.



IT DEMANDED IRON SELF-CONTROL TO KEEP HIS OWN PLANE SKIMMING THE HUNGRY-LOOKING WAVES, BUT HE KNEW EVERY PILOT'S EYE WAS ON HIS LEADING AIRCRAFT, WATCHING, JUDGING...

IF I LET UP NOW, I'LL NEVER HOLD THESE CANUCKS ANOTHER MINUTE!



RIGID WITH CONCENTRATION, JOHNNIE MANAGED TO KEEP THEM ALL AT THE LOW LEVEL HE DEMANDED OF HIMSELF. HIS MIND SEARCHING FOR THE REASON OF AN ATTACK ON SUCH AN UNUSUAL TARGET.

I GUESS SOMEBODY WANTS TO FIND OUT IF WE REALLY CAN FIRE ROCKETS AT WATER LEVEL.



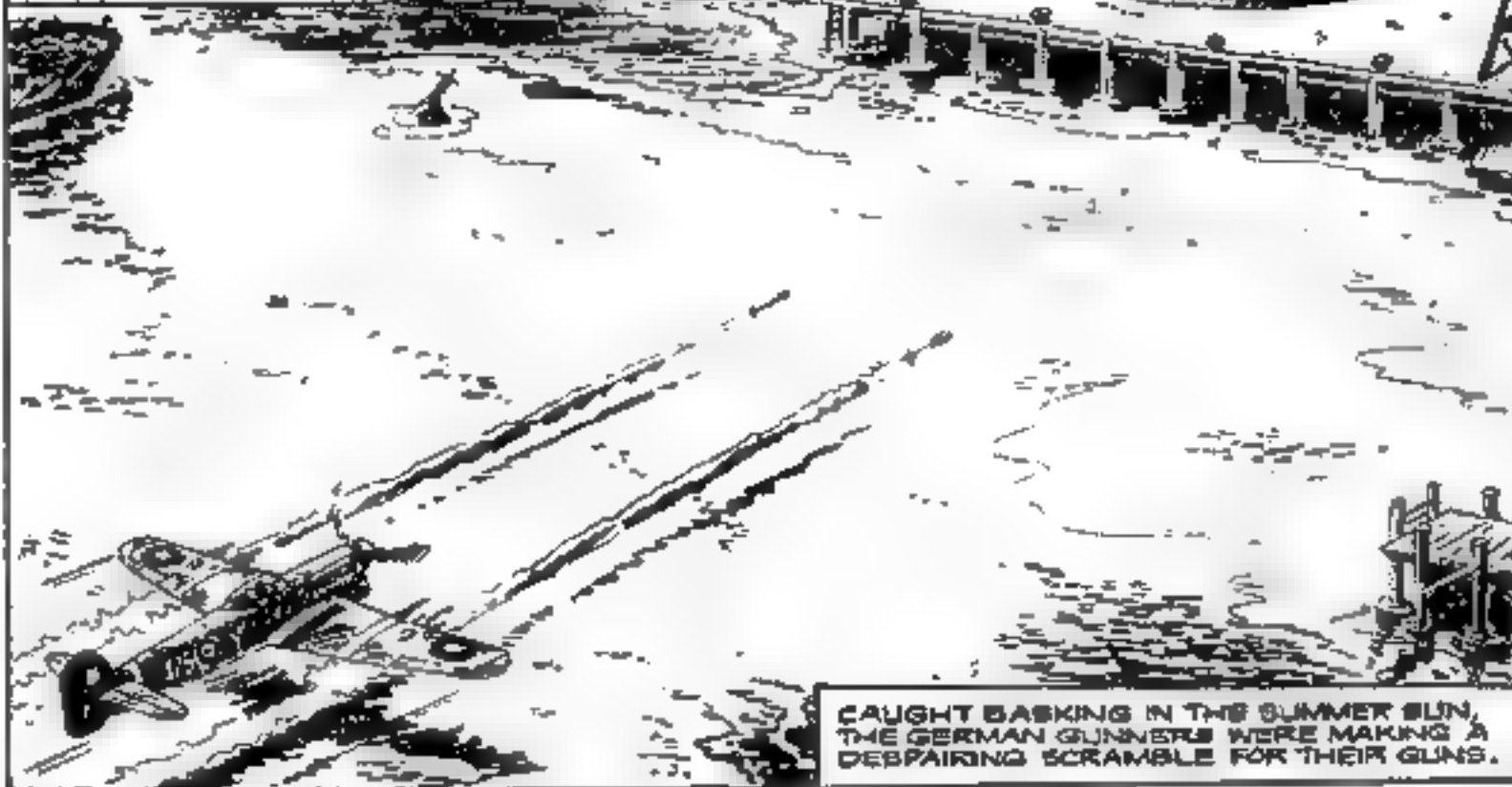
HIS NAVIGATION WAS, AS USUAL, DEAD ACCURATE

I CAN SEE THE PROMENADE THE PIER



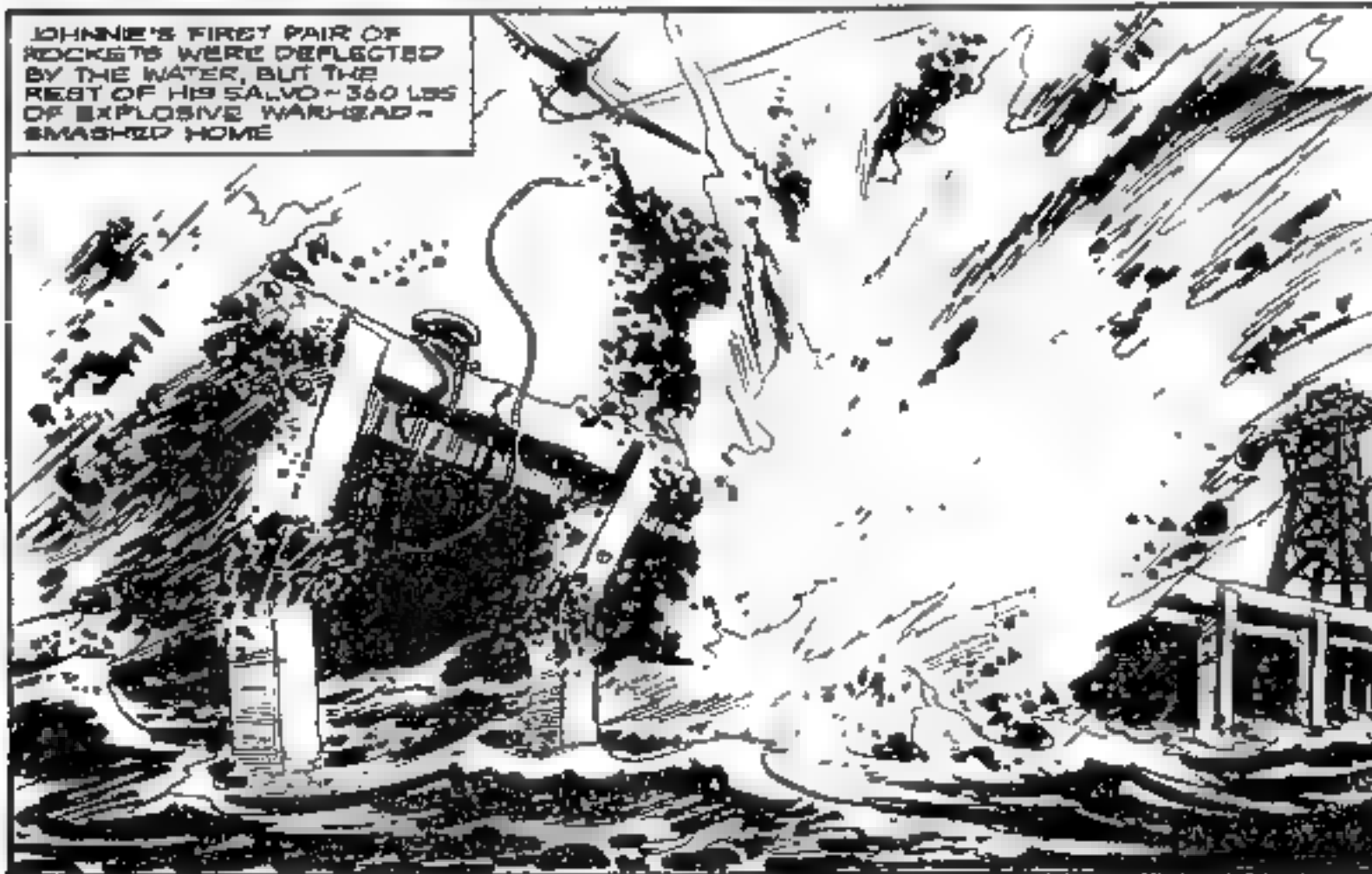
IN THAT MOMENT OF THE ATTACK, HIS FEAR OF THE JOSTLING WAVES BENEATH WAS FORGOTTEN.

AT ABSOLUTE WATER-LEVEL, HE AIMED HIS TYPHOON AT THE TARGET~ AND LET FLY HIS ROCKETS



CAUGHT BASKING IN THE SUMMER SUN, THE GERMAN GUNNERS WERE MAKING A DEBPAIRING SCRAMBLE FOR THEIR GUNS.

JOHNNIE'S FIRST PAIR OF ROCKETS WERE DEFLECTED BY THE WATER, BUT THE REST OF HIS SALVO~360 LBS OF EXPLOSIVE WARHEAD~ SMASHED HOME



HARD BEHIND THEIR LEADER
CAME MORE TYPHOONS,
MORE FLARING ROCKETS TO
SPLINTER THE PIER'S
TIMBERS LIKE MATCHSTICKS.

THE
PIER'S
COLLAPSING!

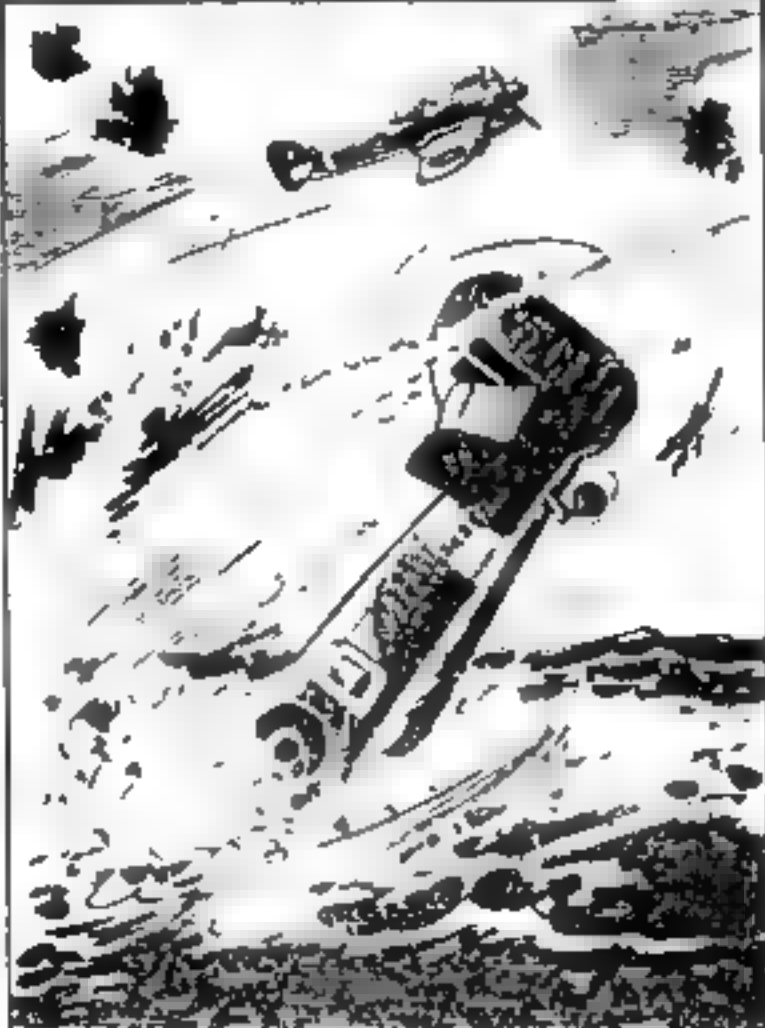
JOHNNIE LOST ALL ANXIETY IN THE
HEARTENING SUCCESS OF THIS ATTACK.
HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF WESLEY GOODMAN'S
TYPHOON, HUGGING THE WATER AND
ABOUT TO DELIVER THE KNOCK-OUT

GOOD
BOY,
WES!

NEXT SECOND, JOHNNIE'S HEART TURNED OVER AS HE SAW GOODMAN'S WING TIP CLIP THE WATER.



WITH ANGUISHED EYES, JOHNNIE SAW THE SWIFT DEATH PLUNGE



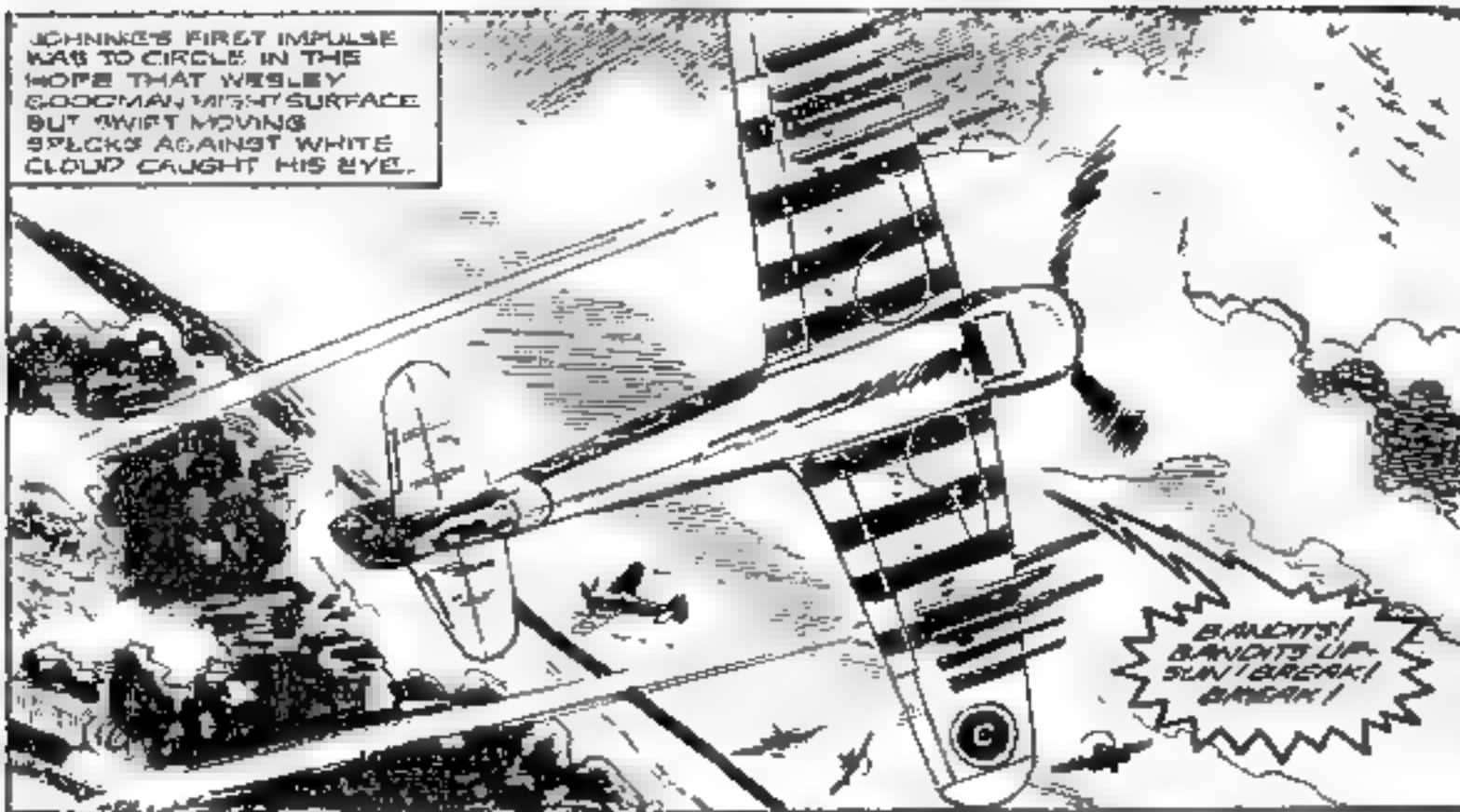
AND AGAIN HE WAS FEELING THE TITTER OF HIS OWN ENTOMBMENT IN A COCKPIT

GRANT BULLY'S HORROR TURNED EMPTY TO RAGE - RAGE AGAINST THE MAN HE FELT RESPONSIBLE

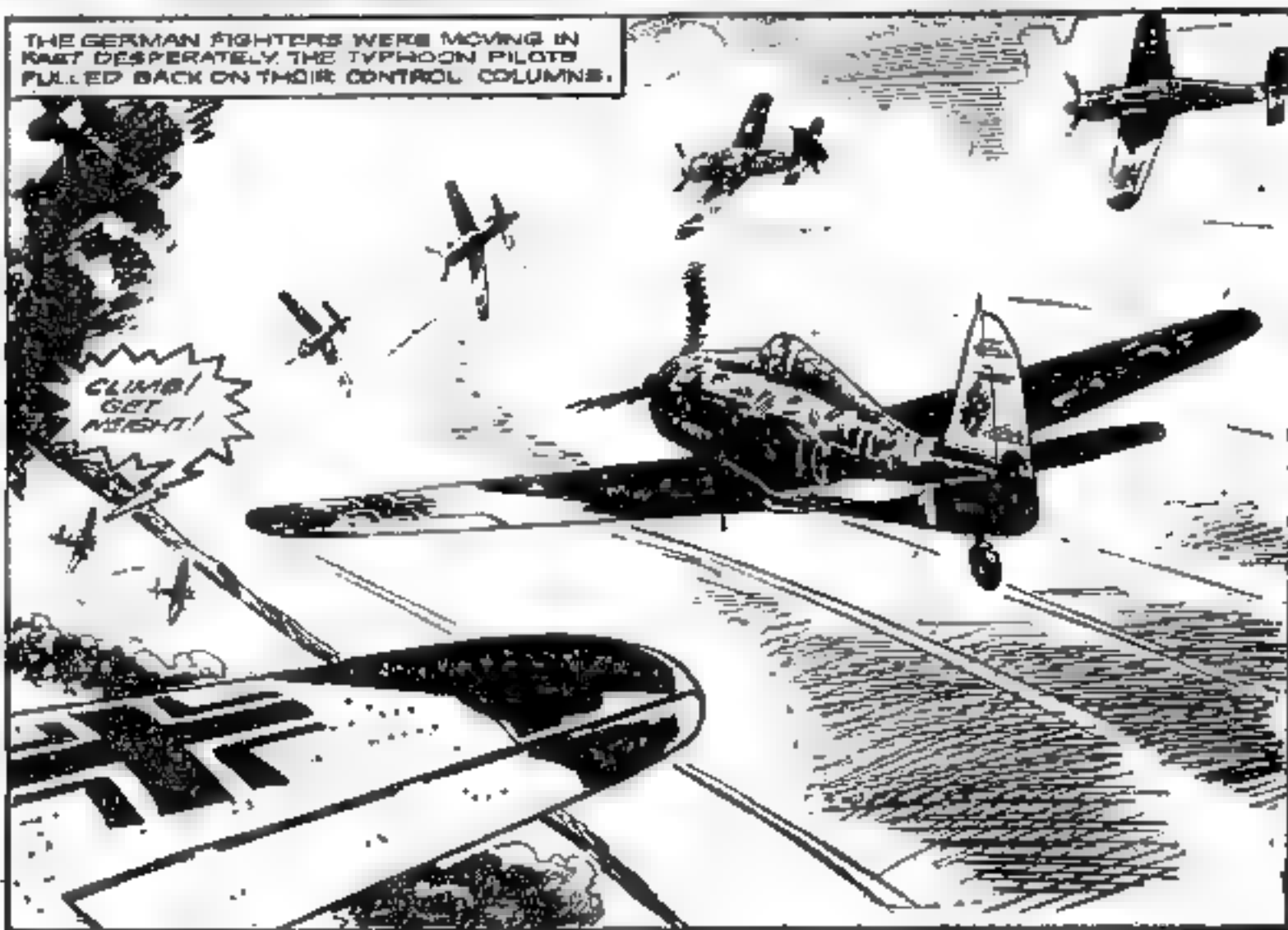
FIRST OUR BAKER...
AND NOW, WE'S
GOODMAN, AND ALL
THROUGH THIS
JARVIS GUY AND HIS
SUICIDAL LOW-
FLYING IDEAS!



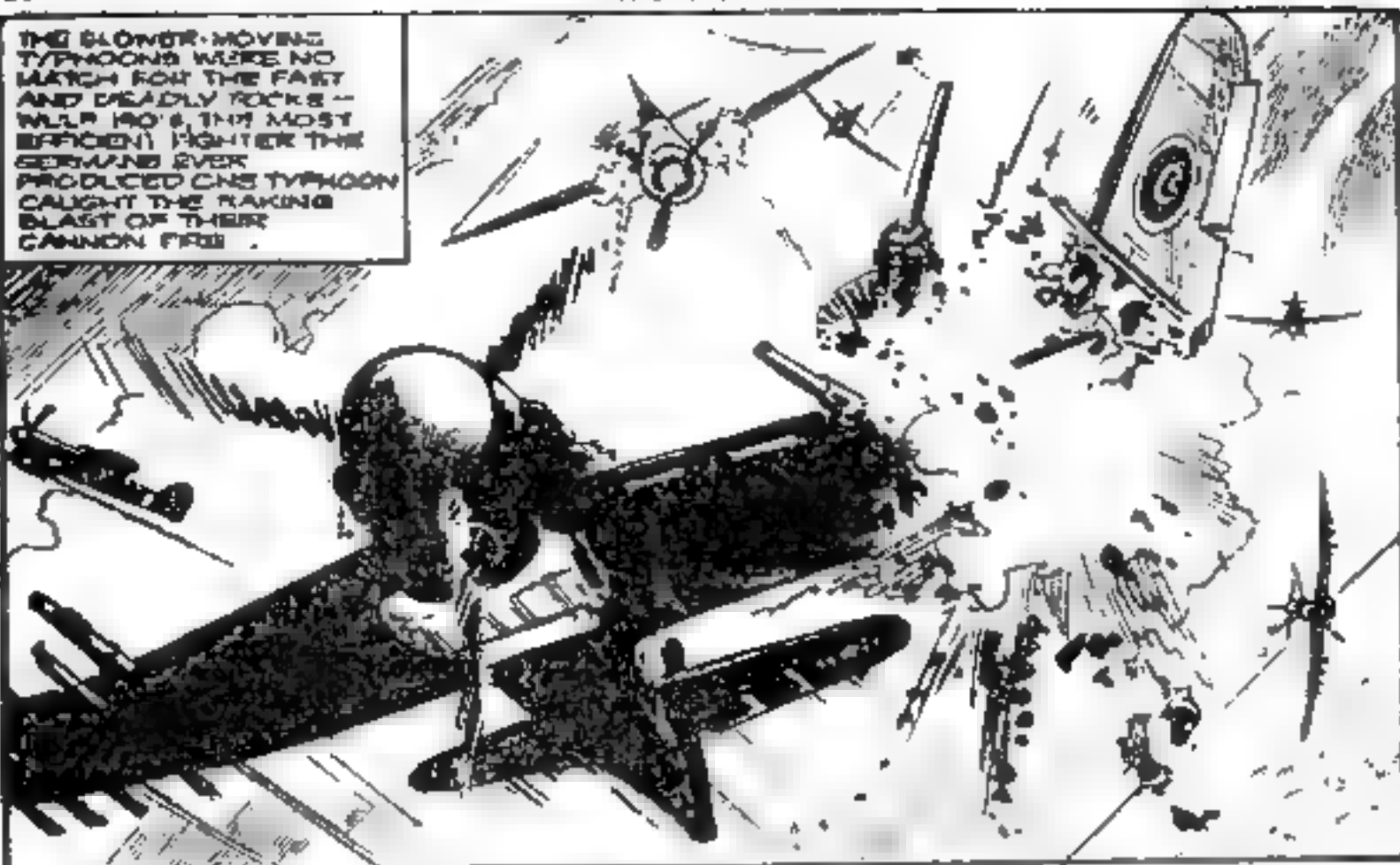
JOHNKE'S FIRST IMPULSE WAS TO CIRCLE IN THE HOPE THAT WESLEY GOODMAN MIGHT SURFACE BUT TWIST MOVING SPLECKS AGAINST WHITE CLOUD CAUGHT HIS EYE.



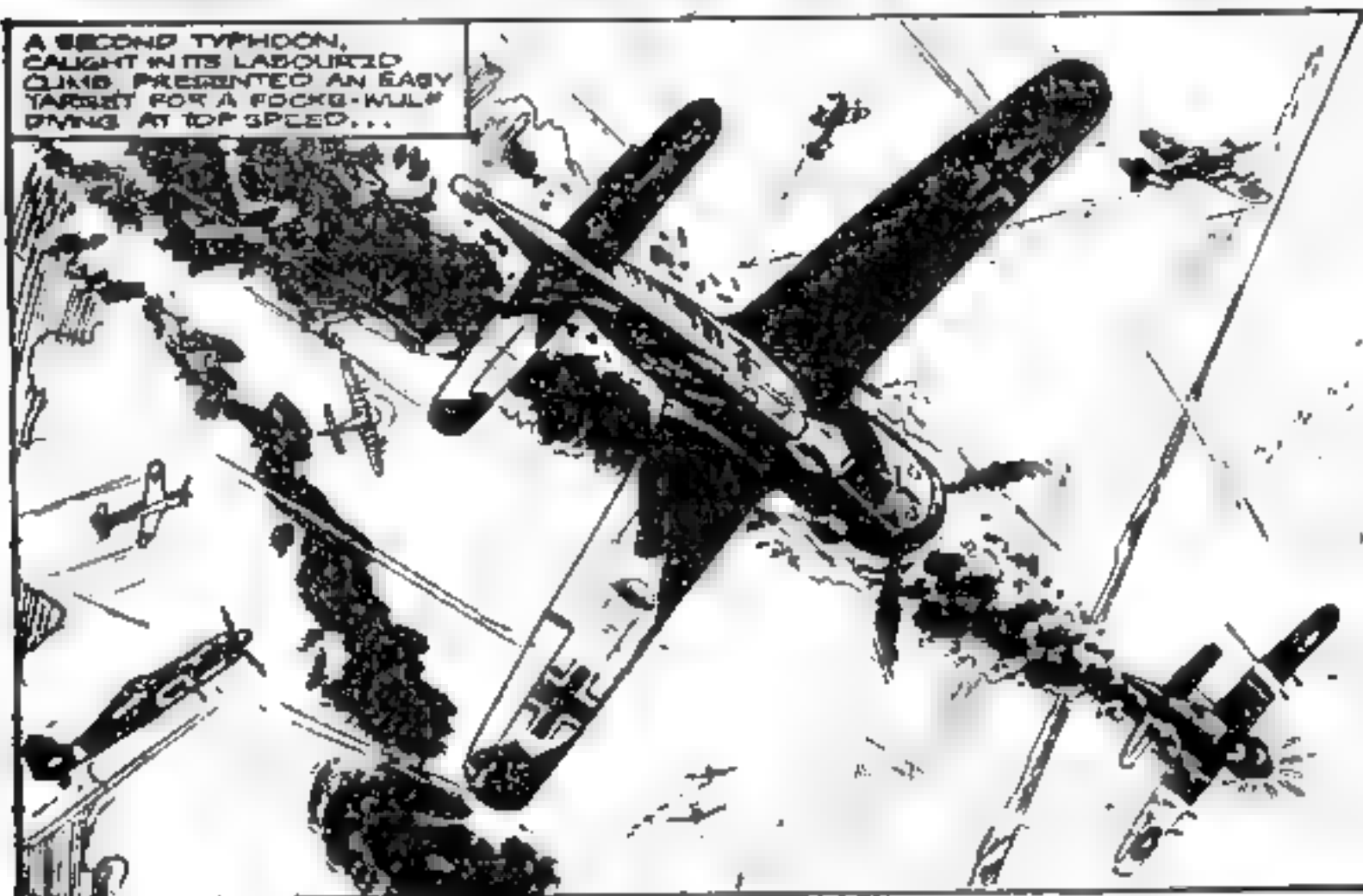
THE GERMAN FIGHTERS WERE MOVING IN FAST DESPERATELY. THE TYPHOON PILOTS PULLED BACK ON THEIR CONTROL COLUMNS.



THE SLOWER-MOVING TYPHOONS WERE NO MATCH FOR THE FAST AND DEADLY ROCKS - WULF HAD THE MOST EFFICIENT FIGHTER THE GERMANS EVER PRODUCED AND TYPHOON CAUGHT THE RAGING BLAST OF THEIR CANNON FIRE.

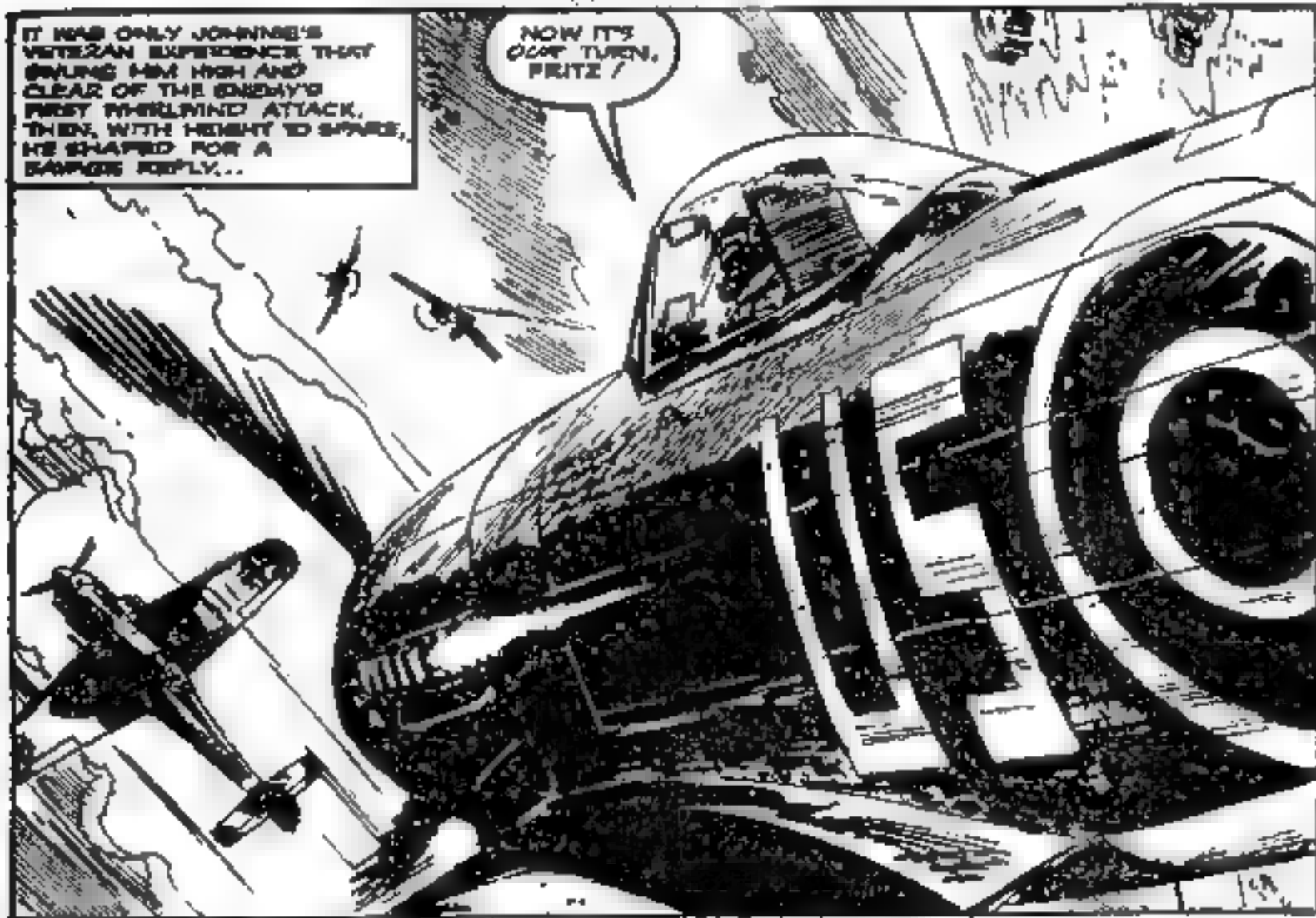


A SECOND TYPHOON, CAUGHT IN ITS LABOURING CLIMB, PRESENTED AN EASY TARGET FOR A FOCKE-WULF DYING AT TOP SPEED...

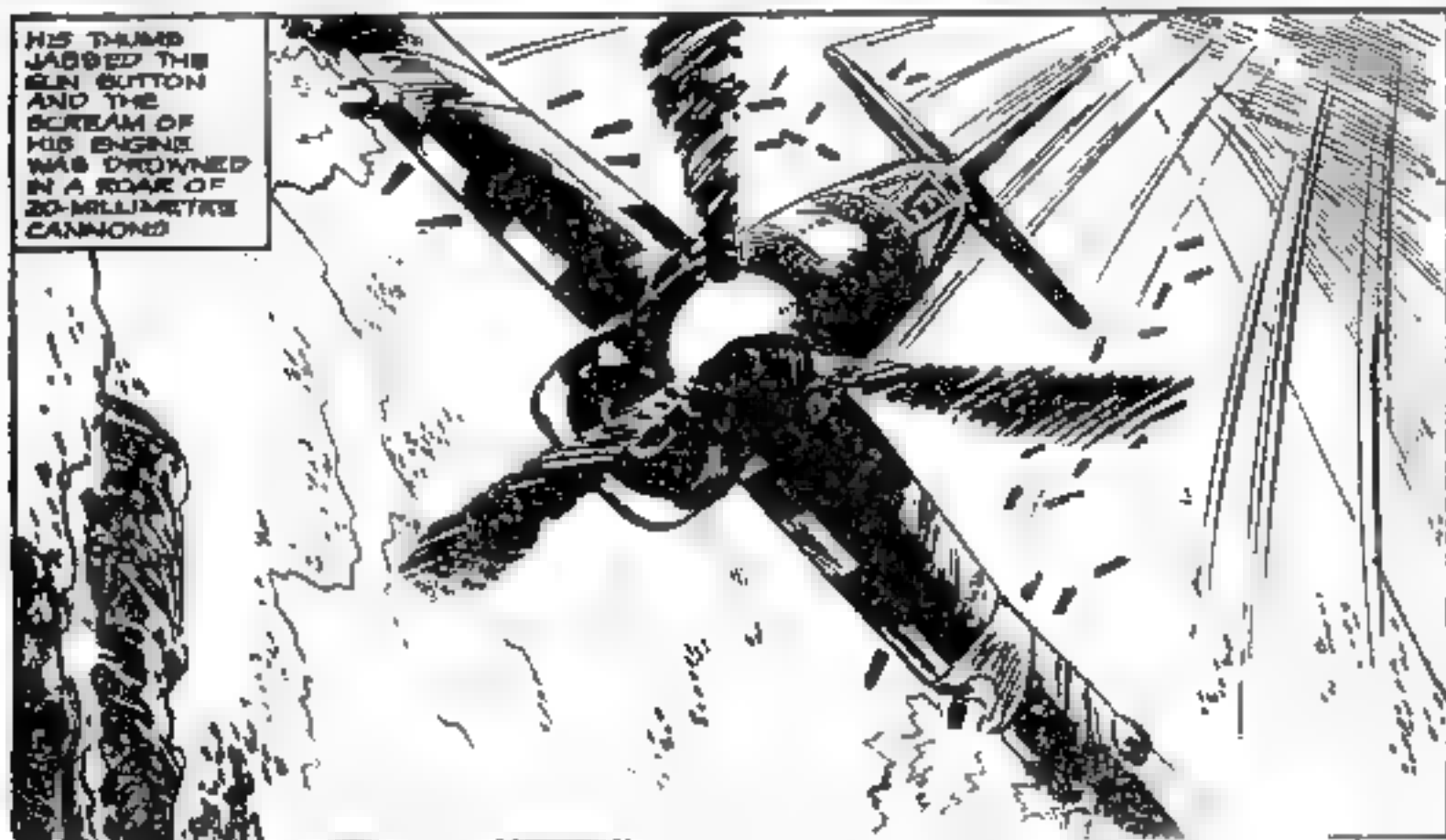


IT WAS ONLY JOHNNIE'S VETERAN EXPERIENCE THAT BRUNG HIM HIGH AND CLEAR OF THE ENEMY'S FIRST WINDMILL ATTACK. THEN, WITH HEIGHT TO SPARE, HE SHAFED FOR A BANGIN' REPLY...

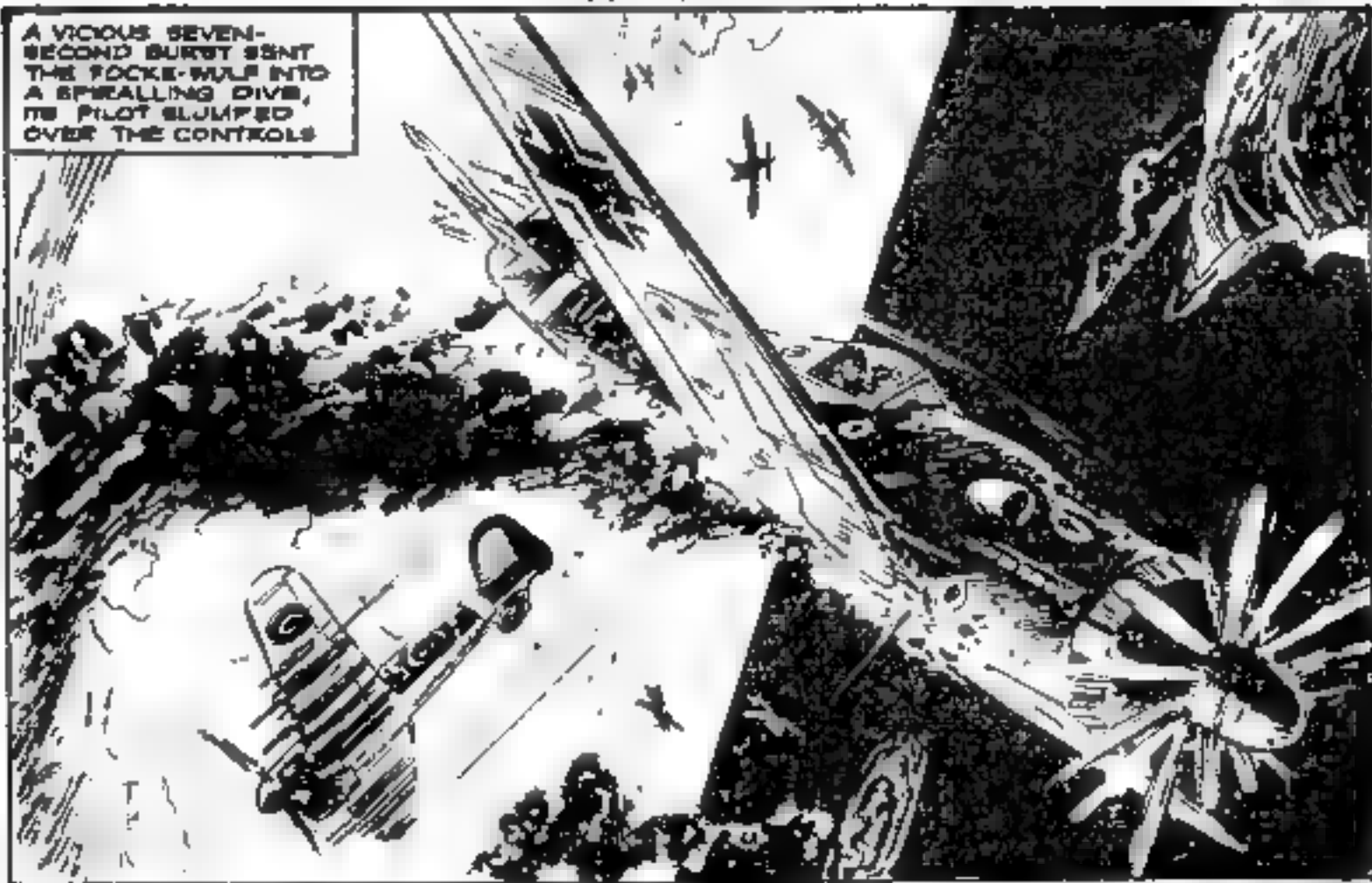
NOW IT'S
OLAF TURN,
FRITZ!



HIS THUMB
JAGGED THE
GUN BUTTON
AND THE
SCREAM OF
HIS ENGINE
WAS DROWNED
IN A ROAR OF
20-MILLIMETER
CANNONS!



A VICIOUS SEVEN-SECOND BURST SENT THE FOCKE-WULF INTO A SPINNING DIVE, ITS PILOT SLUMPED OVER THE CONTROLS



SUDDENLY THE SKY WAS CLEAR OF ENEMY PLANES CALLING THE TYPHOONS INTO FORMATION, JOHNNIE JARVIS LED HIS BATTERED MEN HOME HIS OWN HEART WAS HEAVY

WEB GOODMAN - THE ONLY ONE I COULD CALL A FRIEND - AND NOW HE'S GONE



THE MOMENT JOHNNIE CLIMBED OUT OF HIS COCKPIT, HE SENSED TROUBLE

HEY, WARRIS!



GRANT SCULLY'S CALL HAD A HOSTILE RING ABOUT IT

THE TOUGH TORONTO MAN CAME STRIDING OVER JOHNNIE GRACED HIMSELF.

GUS BAKER AND NOW WE'VE GOT GOODMAN? I SAID YOU'D KILL US ALL!

TAKE THAT BACK, SCULLY!



IT WAS BAD ENOUGH LOSING THE ONLY FRIEND HE HAD, BUT TO BE BLAMED FOR HIS TRAGIC DEATH WAS TOO MUCH JOHNNIE'S TEMPER FLARED

YOU KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT, BEFORE I

"SHUT IT FOR ME? WHY DON'T YOU TRY IT? MURDERER!"



SOMETHING SEEMED TO SNAP INS DE JARVIS, AND STUNG BEYOND ENDURANCE, HE LASHED OUT

UGH!



WHITE AND TAKEN JOHN DE JARVIS STARED DOWN AT THE CRUMPLED FORM OF HIS "TORMENTOR" THEN HE SWUNG ON HIS HEEL AND STRODE AWAY



I MUST BE CRAZY/
I'LL BE GLAD WHEN
THIS SPECIAL TARGET
BUSINESS IS OVER.
THEN I'LL ASK
FOR A TRANSFER.

STILL SHAKEN FROM HIS BRUSH WITH SCULLY, JOHNNIE JARVIS WAS JUST ABOUT TO DRIVE OFF IN HIS ANCIENT SPORTS CAR WHEN THE CHEERY VOICE OF THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER HAILED HIM

IT'S COME, SIR!

WHAT'S COME?

THE SPECIAL TARGET AT LEAST, YOUR INSTRUCTIONS FOR IT.



JOHNNIE CUT HIS ENGINES AND JUMPED OUT TO QUESTION THE I.O. FURTHER

THE SQUADRON IS TO FIT LONG RANGE TANKS AND FLY TO TREFANNORTH IN CORNWALL.

WHEN?

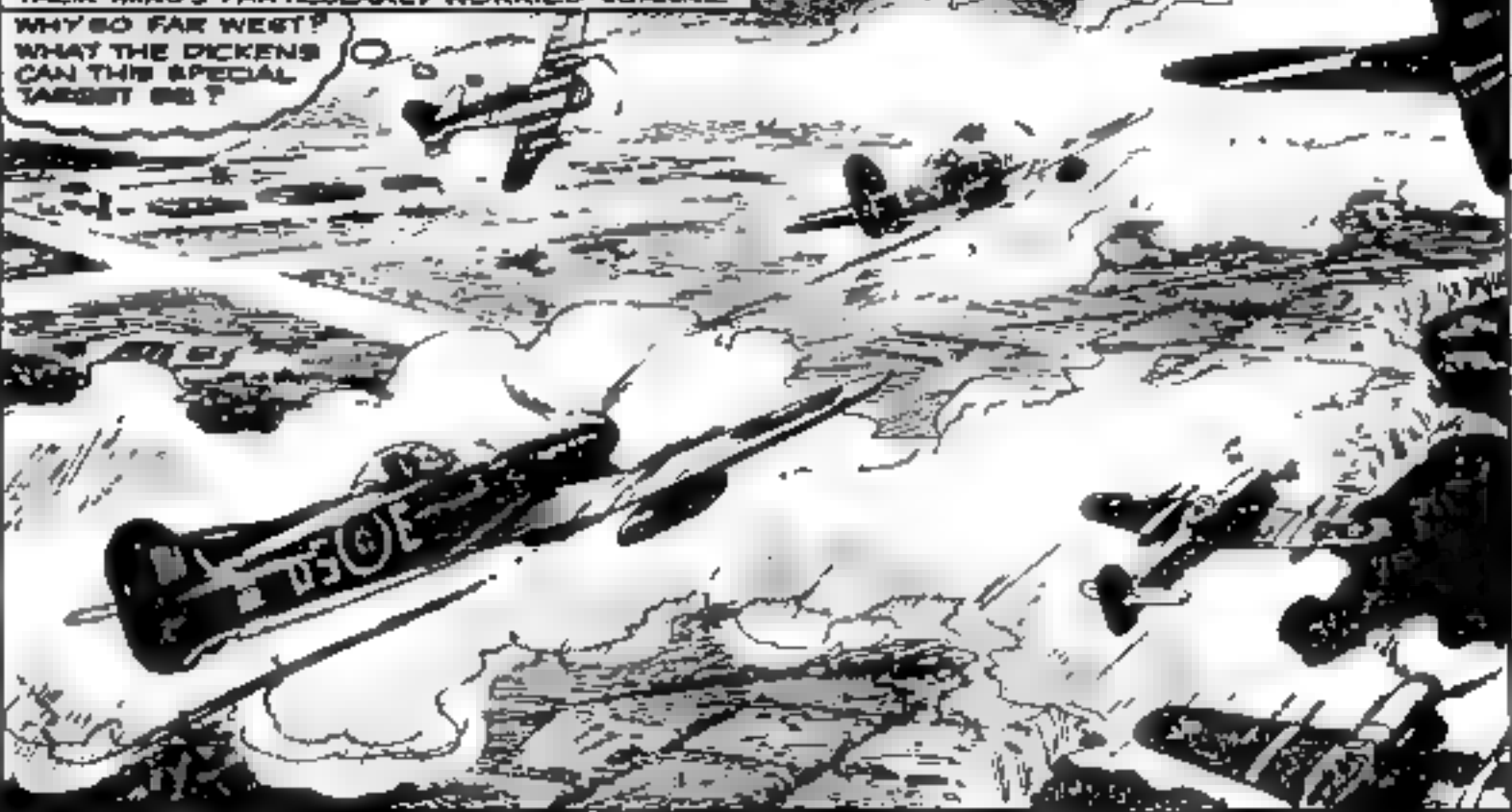
TONIGHT, SIR!



Chapter 4. LONG HAUL

THAT AFTERNOON SAW FEVERISH PREPARATION BY EVENING, JOHNNIE JARVIS WAS LEADING HIS SQUADRON OVER THE WILD CORNISH LANDSCAPE THE QUESTION THAT NAGGED AT THEIR MINDS PARTICULARLY WORRIED JOHNNIE

WHY SO FAR WEST?
WHAT THE DICKENS
CAN THIS SPECIAL
TARGET BE?



THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE STRAINED, FORMAL ATMOSPHERE WHICH SEEMED TO HANG OVER R.A.F. STATION, TREFNORTH JOHNNIE WAS TOLD TO PARADE HIS MEN, AND SOON HE KNEW THE REASON WHY

GREAT
SCOTT! AN AIR
VICE MARSHAL! THIS
MUST BE SOMETHING
REALLY
SPECIAL!



THE CANADIANS EYED THE IMPRESSIVE APPROACH OF AIR VICE-MARSHAL SIR BARTLETT THOMPSON WITH GROWING

AFTER A TERSE GREETING,
THE BIG MAN WENT AHEAD
TO THE BRIEFING ROOM
WHERE PRESENTLY HE
ANNOUNCED HIMSELF

THE
A.O.C. WILL
BRIEF YOU
HIMSELF.



THE MEN'S STARTLED EYES FOCUSED ON A DETAILED PLASTER
MODEL OF A SHIPPING HARBOUR-BUT WITH AN OMINOUS DIFFERENCE

THE
U-BOAT PEN
BASED ON THE
ILE DE NEEZ OFF
THE WEST COAST
OF FRANCE-YOUR
TARGET FOR
TOMORROW,
GENTLEMEN!



WITH BATED BREATH, THEY FOLLOWED SIR BARTLETT'S EXPLANATORY FINGER POINTING FIRST TO THE HARBOUR ENTRANCE, THEN TO THE PAIR OF LOCK GATES.

"AND THIS IS THE U-BOAT PEN ITSELF, A MASSIVE BLOCK OF CONCRETE

IN SOMBER TONES THE AIR VICE-MARSHAL WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT NO AMOUNT OF BOMBS, EVEN OF THE BLOCK-BUSTER TYPE, HAD MADE ANY IMPRESSION ON THIS IMMENSELY STRONG SUBMARINE BASE.

BUT WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT A ROCKET ATTACK MIGHT DO THE TRICK.

IGNORING THE GASP THAT WENT ROUND, THE OLDER MAN GLANCED SHARPLY AT JOHNNIE JARVIS' SET FACE

FORGET THE BASE ITSELF. SQUADRON LEADER, JUST DESTROY THE U-BOATS INSIDE IT—BY AWING YOUR ROCKETS RIGHT INTO THE ENTRANCE...

YOU MEAN A WATER-LEVEL APPROACH, SIR BUT

SUDDENLY JOHNNIE'S MIND FLASHED BACK TO HIS OWN UNDERWATER ORDEAL...

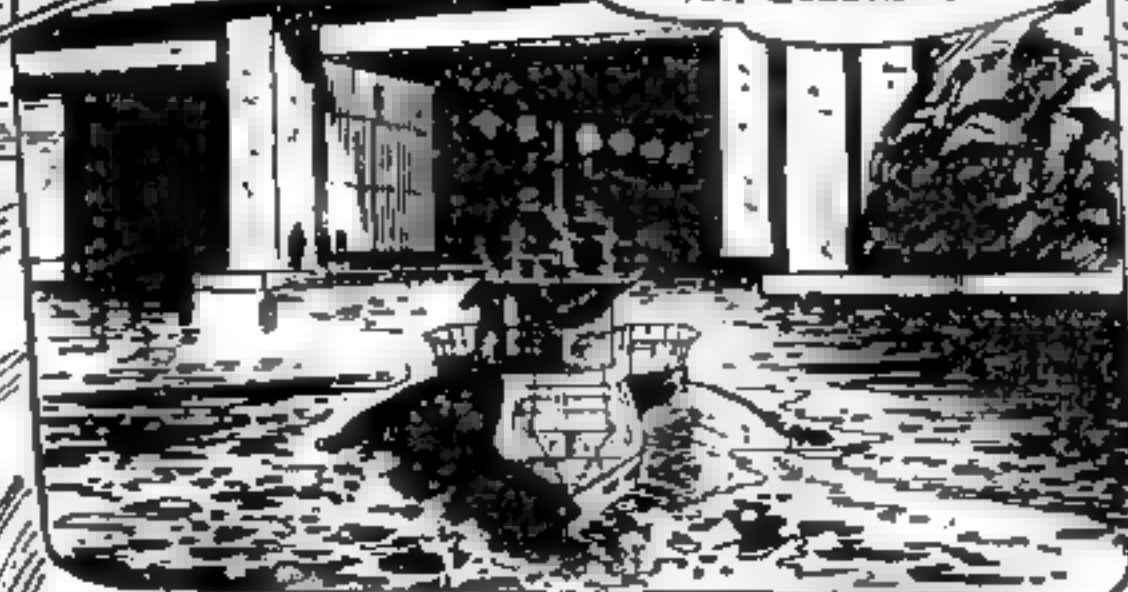
SIR BARTLETT HAD THE ROOM DARKENED AND CALLED FOR A PROJECTED PICTURE OF A U-BOAT FITTED WITH THE NEWEST GERMAN INVENTION—THE SCHNORKEL BREATHING DEVICE.

WITH THIS SPECIAL DEVICE, THESE U-BOATS AT ILE DE NEZ CAN SLIP THROUGH INTO THE CHANNEL AND BECOME A SERIOUS MENACE TO OUR INVASION SHIPPING. THEY MUST BE DESTROYED!



THE PICTURE GAVE PLACE TO ANOTHER—THE CAVERN-LIKE ENTRANCE TO THE U-BOAT PEN AT ILE DE NEZ. SIR BARTLETT DRY TONGUE WENT ON...

THANKS TO THOSE LOCK-GATES YOU SAW IN THE MODEL, THE GERMANS CAN MAINTAIN A WATER LEVEL WHICH KEEPS THEIR U-BOATS ALMOST OUT OF SIGHT SO FIRST YOU'LL HAVE TO BREACH THE LOCK-GATES! ANY QUESTIONS?



THE BRIEFING CONCLUDED, JOHNNIE JARVIS BRACED HIMSELF TO GIVE HIS INSTRUCTIONS IN THE METHOD OF ATTACK...

WE'LL SPLIT INTO TWO FLIGHTS—THE FIRST WILL BREACH THE LOCK-GATES. THE SECOND WILL FOLLOW UP AND BLITZ THE U-BOATS!



IT WAS PLAIN HIS MEN THOUGHT THE WHOLE THING A SUICIDE MISSION, BUT NOBODY QUESTIONED JOHNNIE'S PLAN OF ATTACK.

IF YOU HAVE TO SALE OUT, THERE'LL BE A LINE OF BRITISH SUBMARINES ON THE ROUTE BACK TO PICK YOU UP.



AFTER JOHNNIE HAD OUTLINED HIS PLAN, IT WAS SCULLY WHO POSED THE BIG QUESTION:

BUSTING THE LOCK-GATES WILL BE A PIECE OF CAKE COMPARED TO THE SUB FEN ITSELF, WHO'S DOING WHICH?

YOUR FLIGHT CAN TAKE THE GATES SCULLY YOU CAN LEAVE THE U-BOATS TO MY FLIGHT SATISFIED?



JOHNNIE KNEW THE SECOND ATTACK WAVE WOULD BE THE MORE DANGEROUS HIS FEAR OF DROWNING SURGED UP ANEW AND HE KNEW HE MUST DESTROY IT FOR ALL TIME

AT FIRST LIGHT THE NEXT MORNING, THE ROCKET TYPHOON SQUADRON BROKE EVERYONE'S SLEEP WITH A ROARING TAKE-OFF.



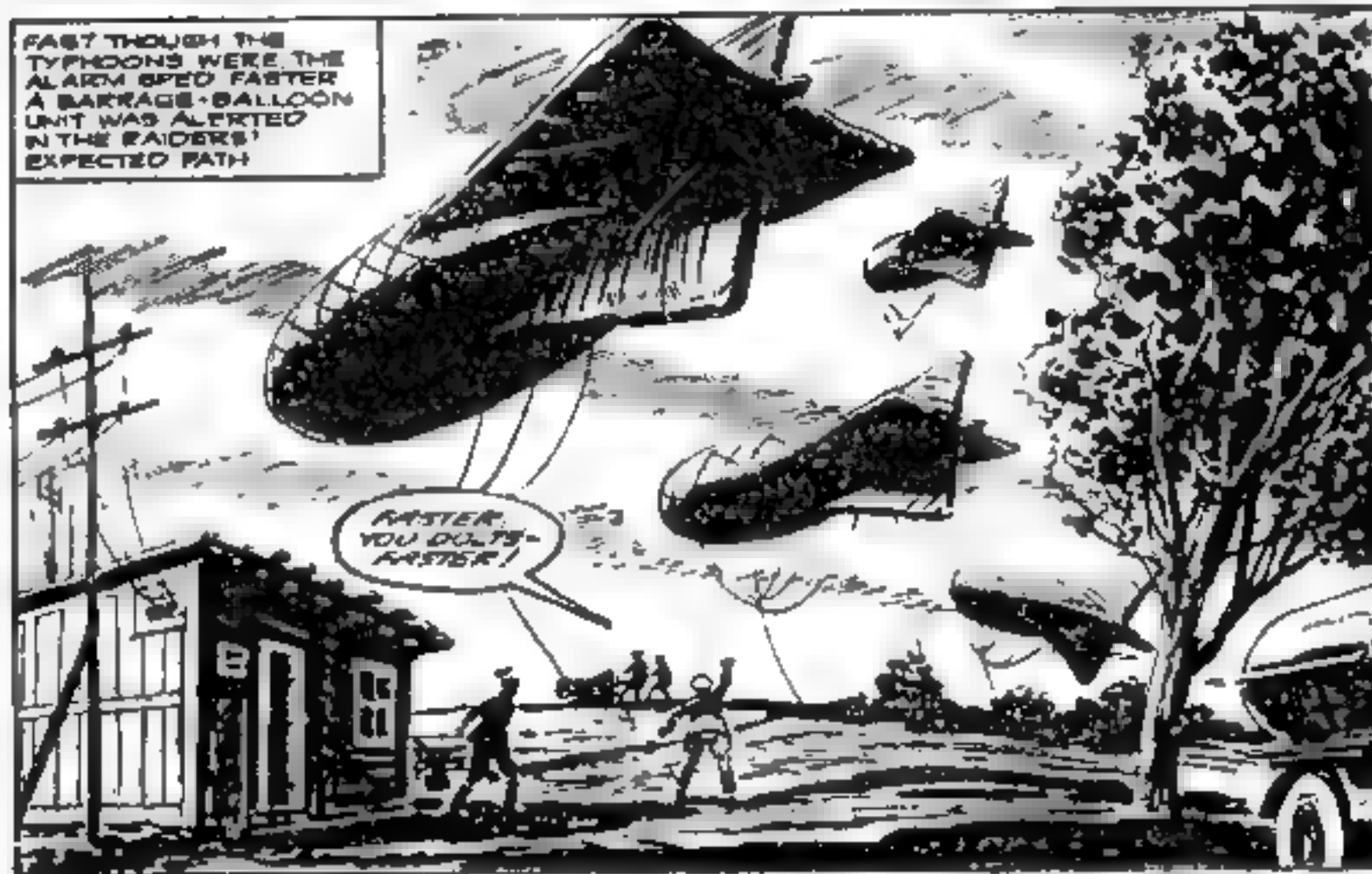
TO SAVE FUEL, JOHNNIE PLOTTED THEIR COURSE ACROSS THE BREYON PENINSULA. AT ZERO FEET, THEY WHIPPED THE TREE-TOPS WITH THEIR SLIPSTREAM.



BUT THIS LOW-LEVEL STRATEGY WAS ONLY PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL IN ITS AIM TO AVOID DETECTION



FAST THOUGH THE TYPHOONS WERE, THE ALARM SPED FASTER. A BARRAGE-BALLOON UNIT WAS ALERTED IN THE RAIDERS' EXPECTED PATH



JOHNIE SPOTTED THE LURKING TRAP IN THE NICK OF TIME AND PULLED EVERYONE AFTER HIM IN A ZOOMING CLIMB - ONLY TO MEET A VICIOUS GUN BARRAGE THAT WAS WAITING FOR THEM...

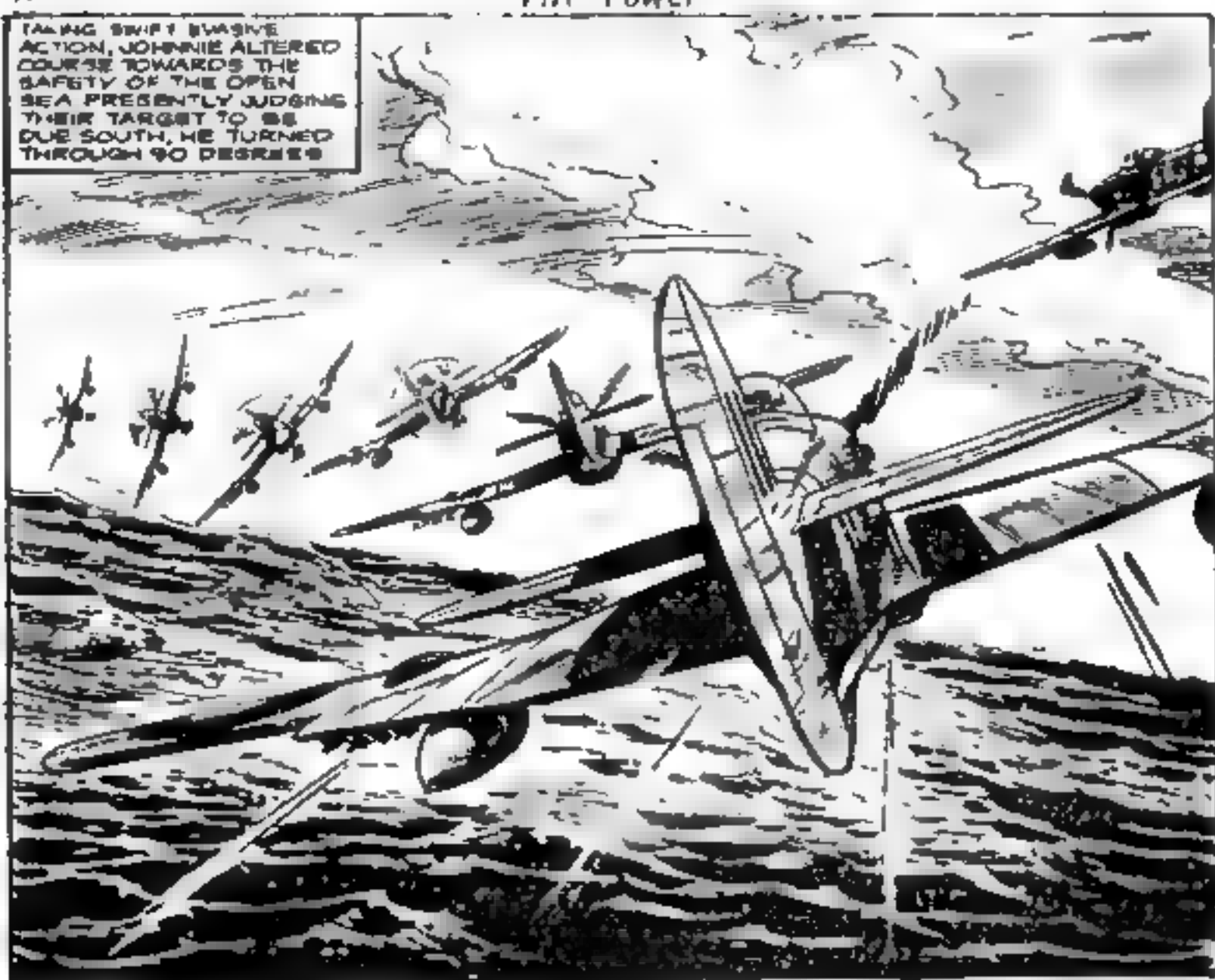
BREAK!

HOLY MACKEREL!

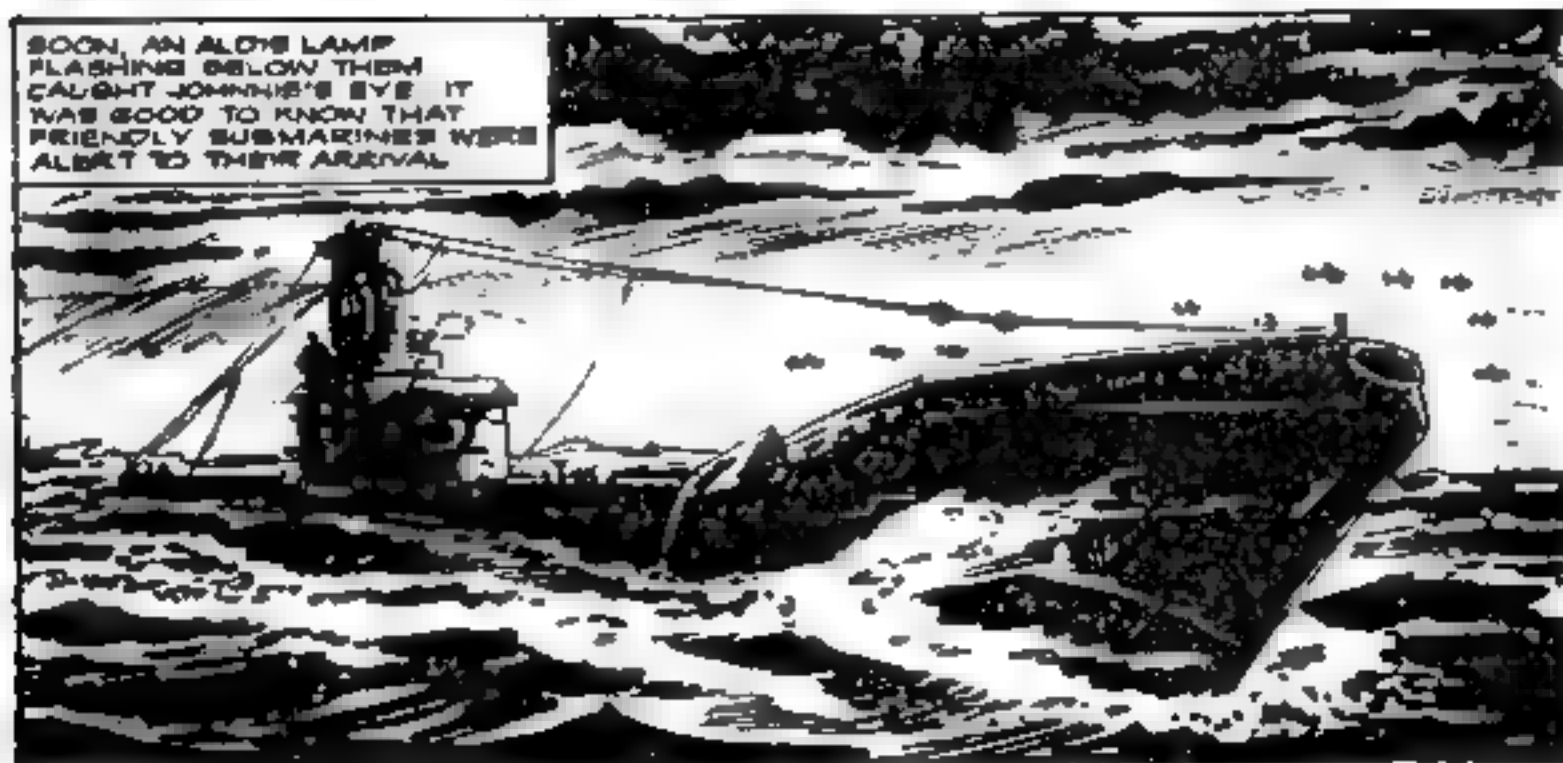
BUCK CALDWELL, THE EX-POLICEMAN FROM EDMONTON, WAS MORTALLY HIT...

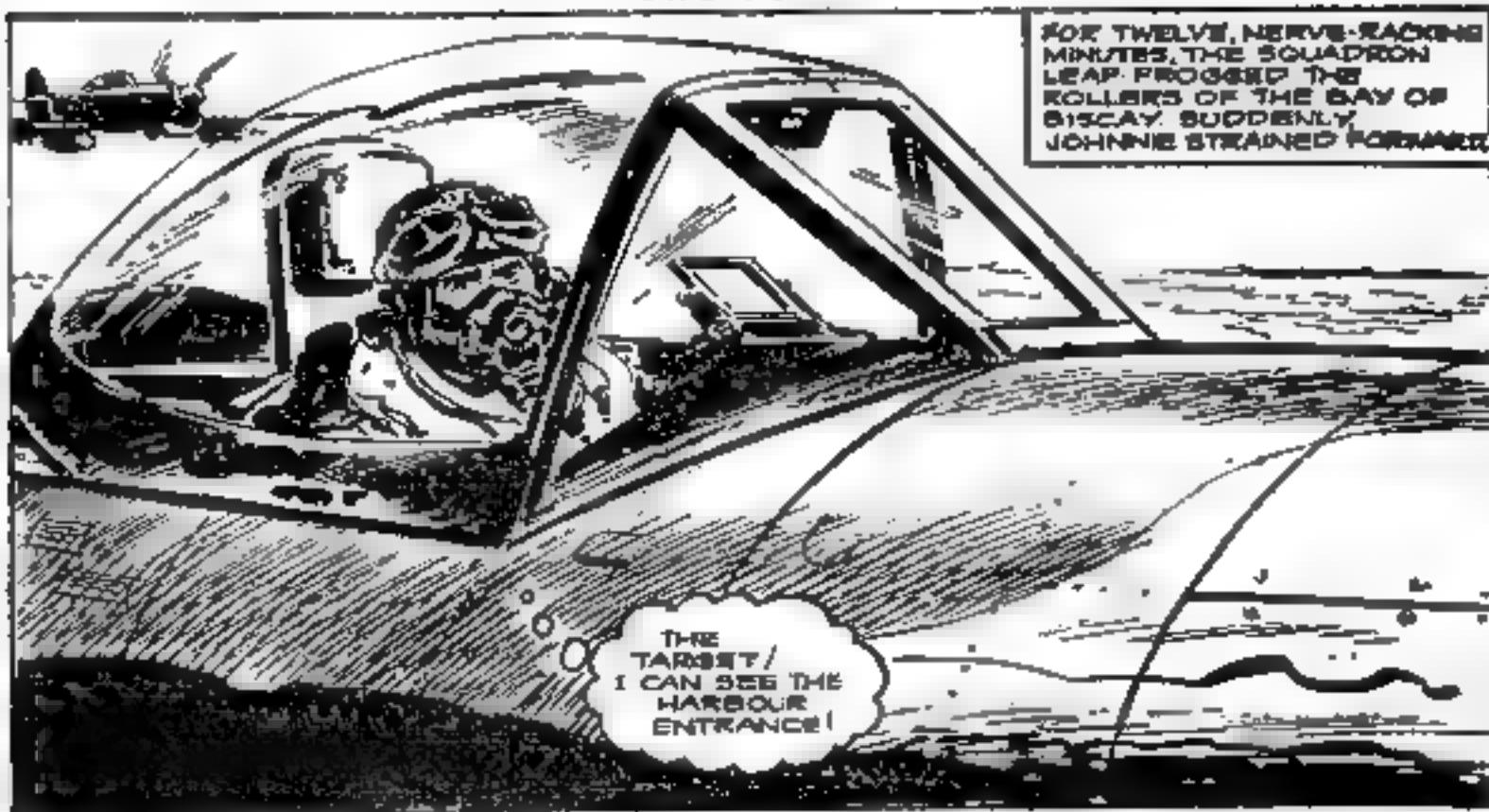


TAKING SWIFT EVASIVE ACTION, JOHNNIE ALTERED COURSE TOWARDS THE SAFETY OF THE OPEN SEA PRESENTLY JUDGING THEIR TARGET TO BE DUE SOUTH, HE TURNED THROUGH 90 DEGREES



SOON, AN ALLOY LAMP FLASHING BELOW THEM CAUGHT JOHNNIE'S EYE. IT WAS GOOD TO KNOW THAT FRIENDLY SUBMARINES WERE ALERT TO THEIR ARRIVAL

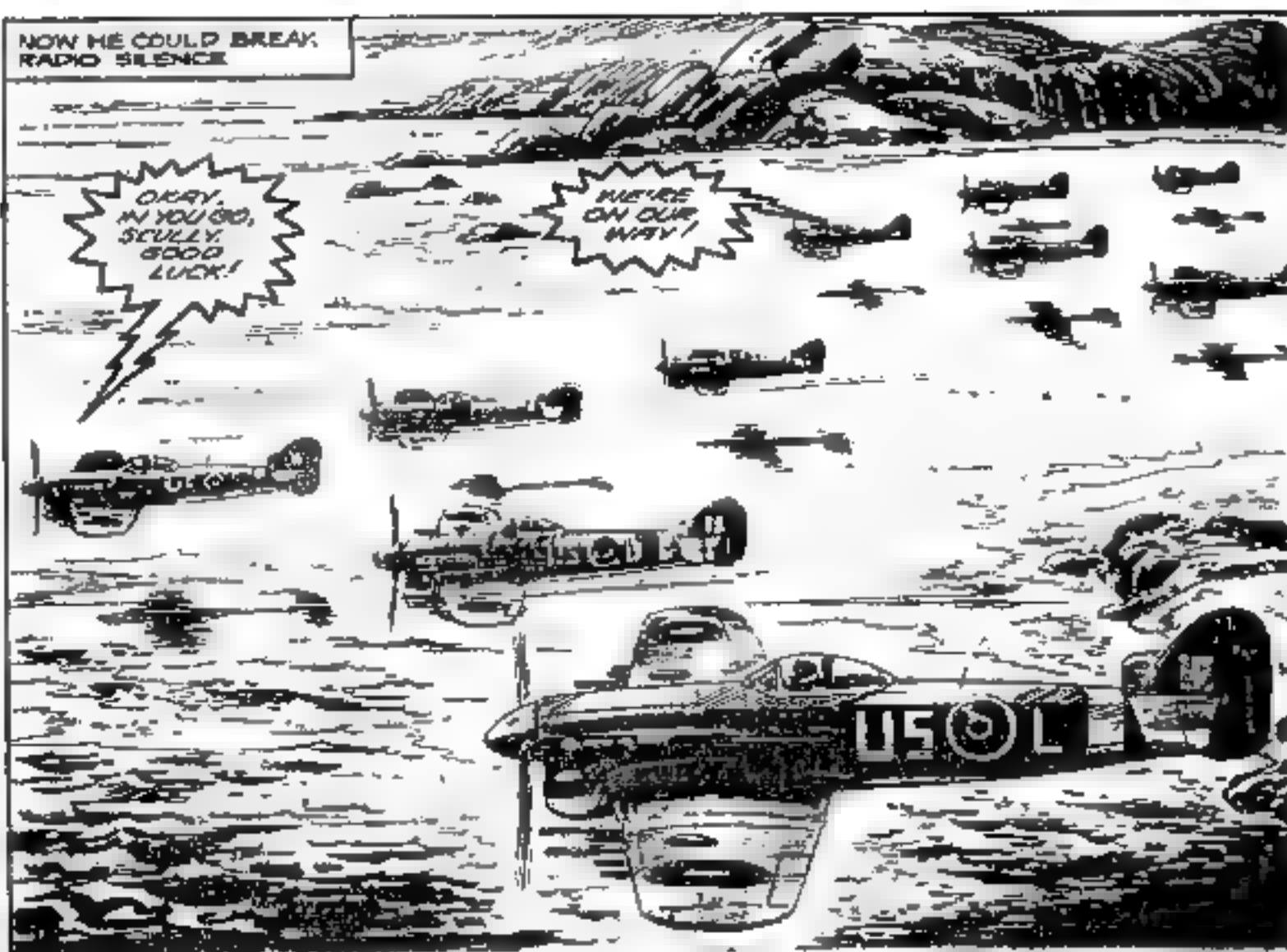




NOW HE COULD BREAK RADIO SILENCE.

OKAY, IN YOU GO, SCULLY. GOOD LUCK!

WE'RE ON OUR WAY!



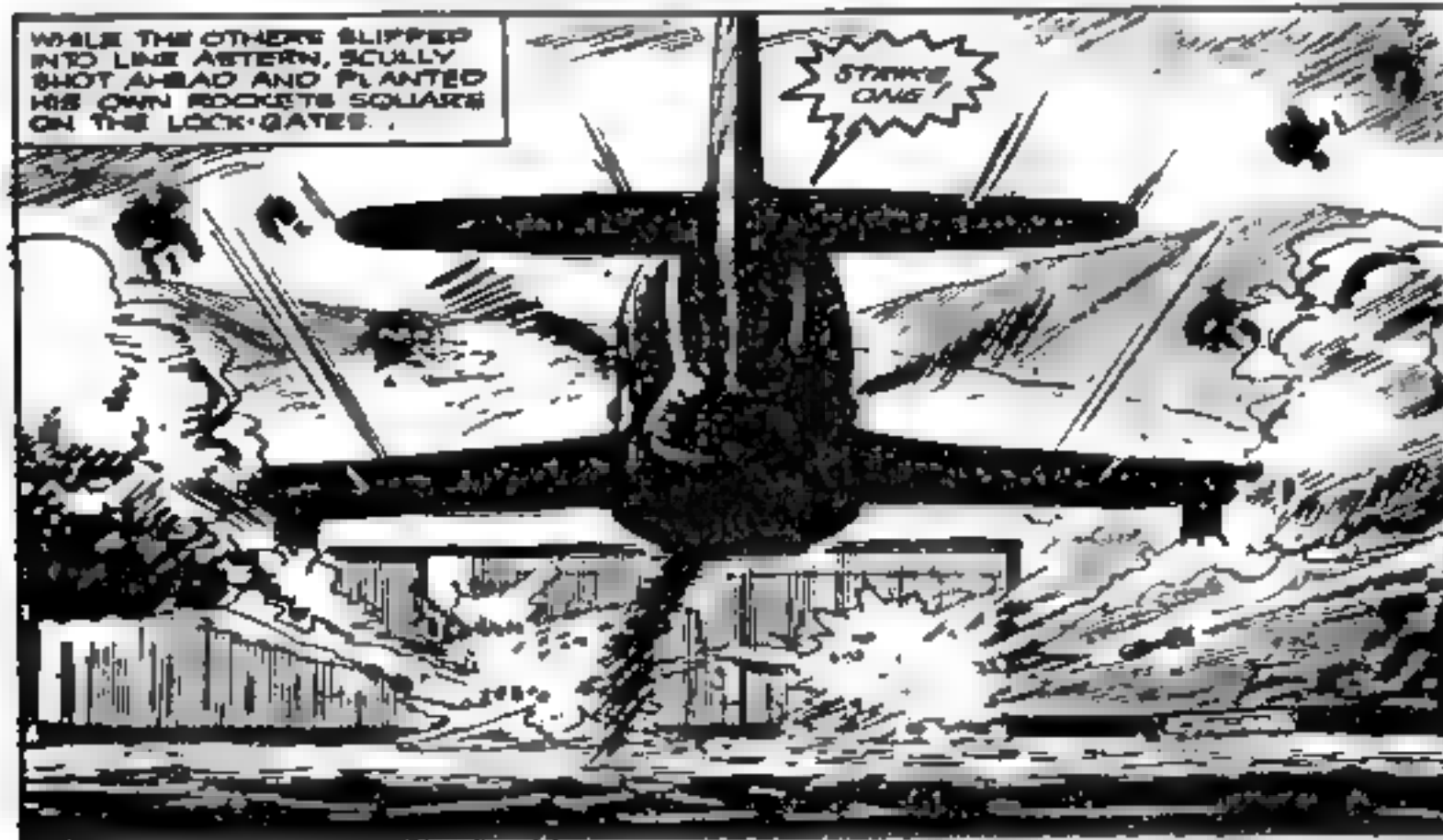
Chapter 5. ***FINEST HOUR***

IF FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT GRANT SCULLY HAD ANY LINGERING DREAD OF THE TASK AHEAD HE DID NOT SHOW IT NOW. LEADING HIS FLIGHT, HE GLIMPSED THE LOCK-GATES THROUGH THE GUN-SPITTING HARBOUR MOUTH, SET HIS SIGHTS, AND WENT LIKE AN ARROW...



WHILE THE OTHERS SLIPPED INTO LINE AFTERN, SCULLY SHOT AHEAD AND PLANTED HIS OWN ROCKETS SQUARE ON THE LOCK-GATES.

STRIKE ONE!

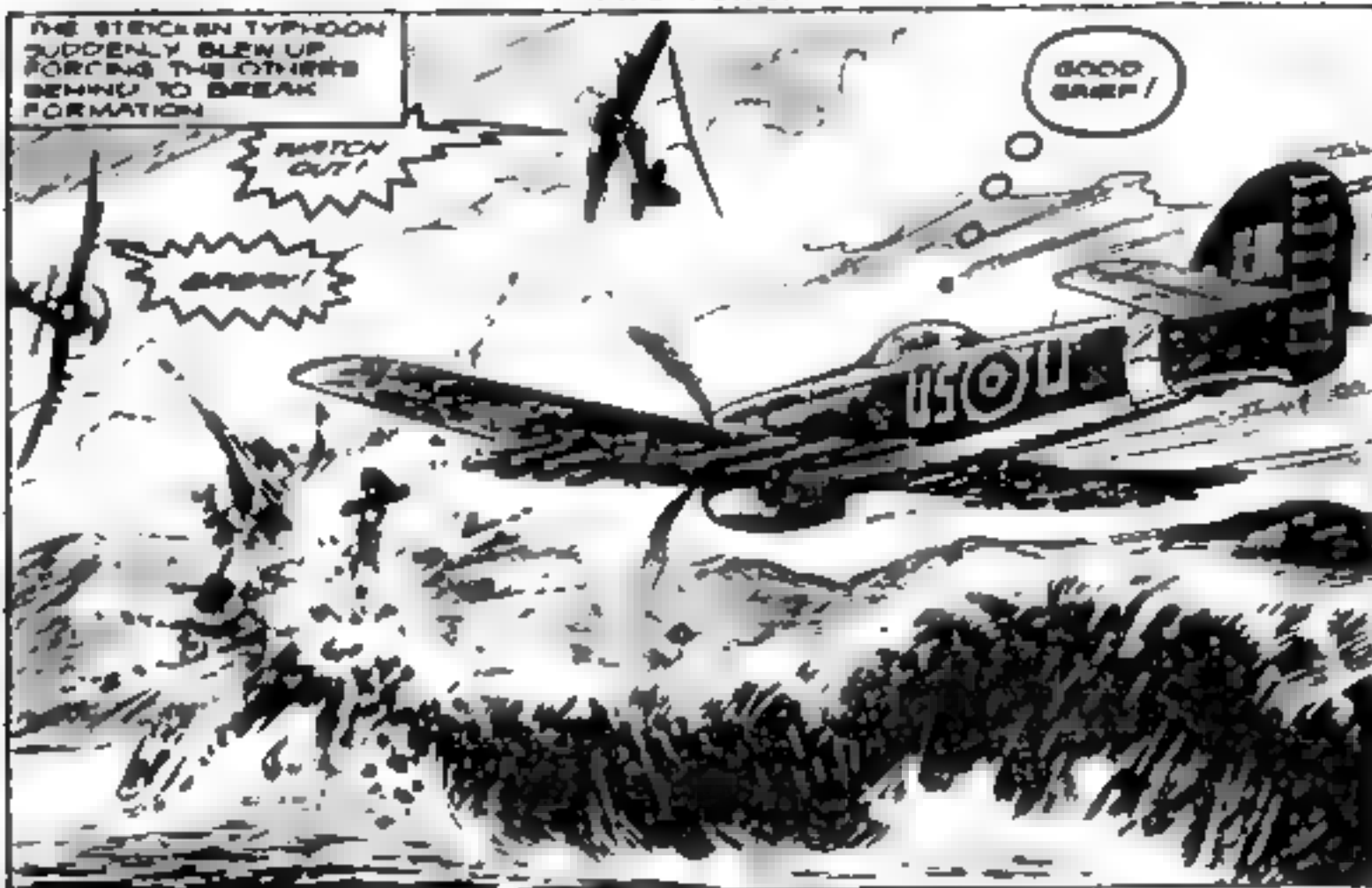


BUT THE GATES, GIANT-TIMBERED AND IRON-BOUND, WERE A TOUGHER PROPOSITION THAN EXPECTED. THEY DID NOT YIELD TO THE FIRST ATTACK. SCULLY'S SALVO ONLY PUNCHED GREAT HOLES IN THEM.



SCULLY HAD RUN THE GAUNTLET UNSCATHED, BUT THE NEXT IN LINE WAS CAUGHT IN A STINGING CROSSFIRE.





WITH THE COURAGE OF DESPAIR THE THREE FALTERING FLOTS FASTENED ON TO JOHNNIE'S TAIL AS HE SPED TOWARDS THE TARGET.

GET LOW!

NO ONE GUESSED THAT JOHNNIE'S SHARP COMMAND WAS MEANT AS MUCH FOR HIS OWN DREAD-FILLED MIND AS FOR THEM. NEVER DID THE EVIL-LOOKING WAVES LICK SO HUNGRILY CLOSE.

TIGHT LIPPED, JOHNNIE STORMED THE HARBOUR GAP AND BORE DOWN ON THE LOCK GATES SIX OF HIS EIGHT ROCKETS SPED LIKE FIERY ARROWS.

GET THEM!

HE WRENCHED THE TYPHOON INTO A TEARING CLIMB AND TWISTED TO SEE THE LOCK GATES CRUMBLING AS SALVO AFTER SALVO SLAMMED HOME



WITHIN THE U-BOAT PEN ITSELF, THE SUDDEN OUTPOURING OF PENT UP WATER SPREAD INSTANT ALARM



JOHNIE JARVIS SWUNG BACK TO HIS OWN FLIGHT, CIRCLING ABOVE THE COAST CLOSE BY.

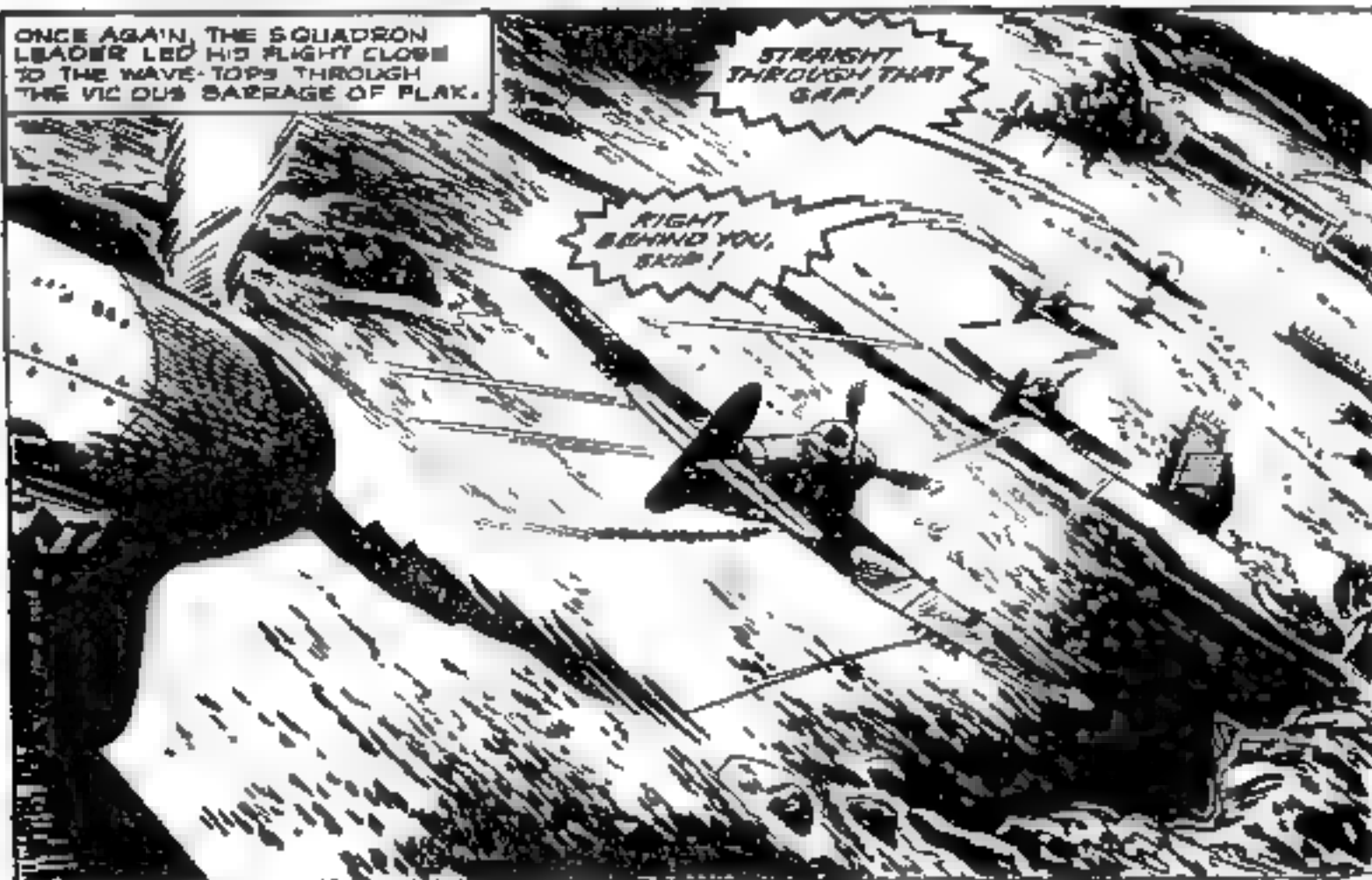
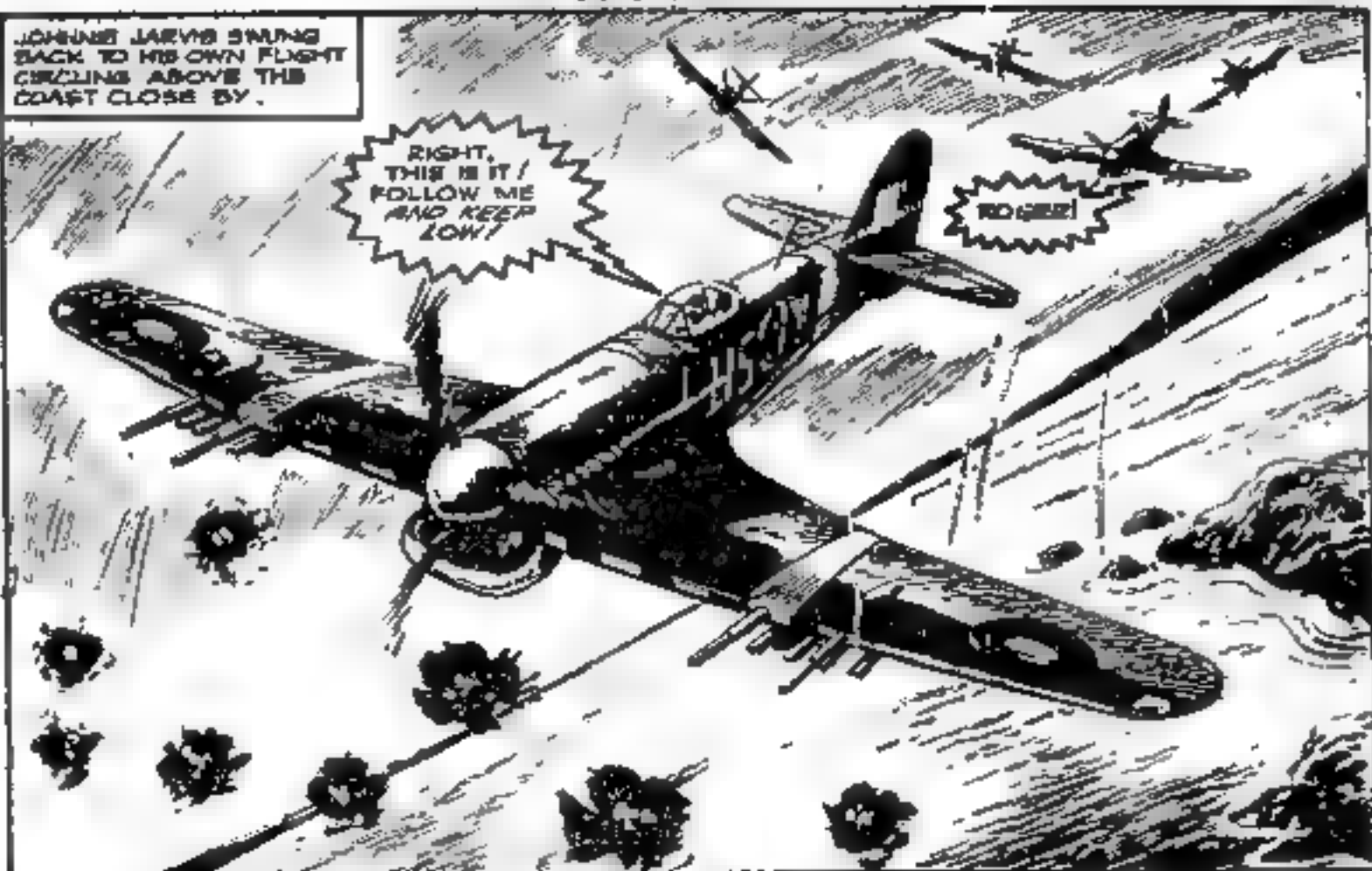
RIGHT, THIS IS IT! FOLLOW ME AND KEEP LOW!

ROGER!

ONCE AGAIN, THE SQUADRON LEADER LED HIS FLIGHT CLOSE TO THE WAVE-TOPS THROUGH THE VICIOUS BARRAGE OF FLAK.

STRAIGHT THROUGH THAT GAP!

RIGHT BEHIND YOU, SKIP!



EYES NARROWED, JOHNNIE JUDGED THE GAP AHEAD AND AEROWED THROUGH...

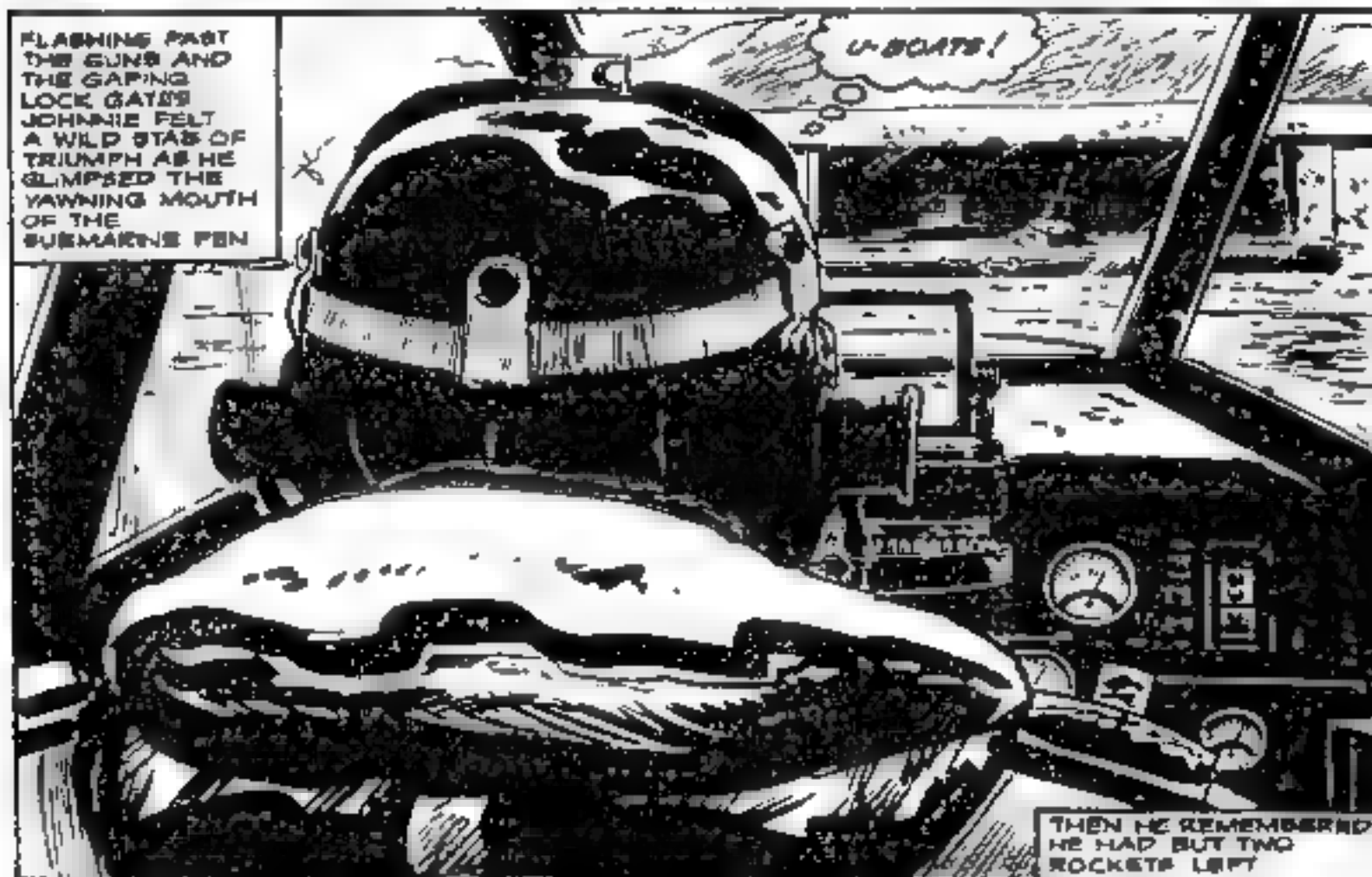
I'M
GOING
IN!



BUT BEHIND HIM PILOT OFFICER CRANE WAS ANOTHER WHO PAID THE SUPREME PRICE IN THE DESPERATE ATTACK...

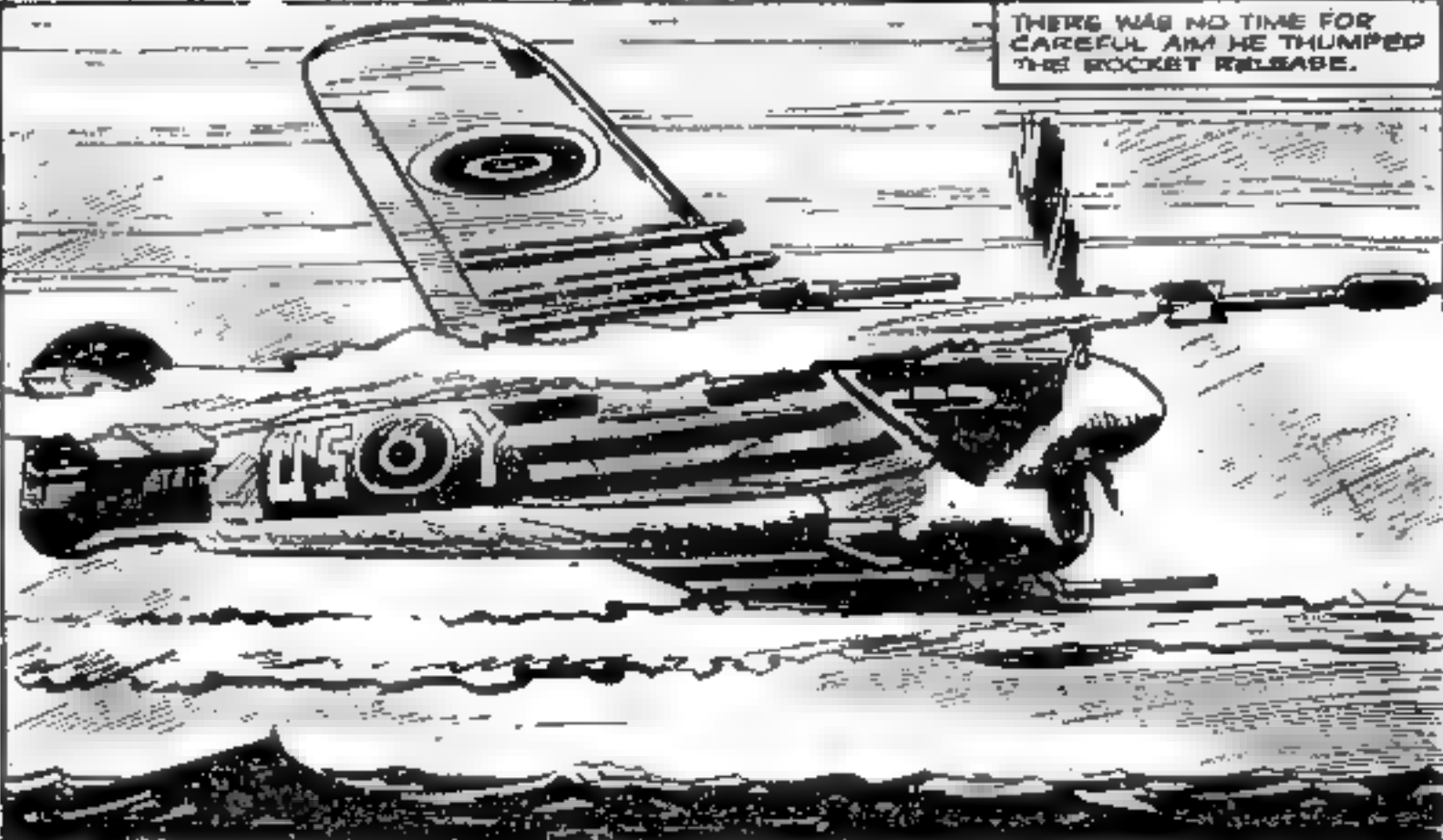
FLASHING PAST THE GUNS AND THE GAPING LOCK GATES JOHNNIE FELT A WILD STAB OF TRIUMPH AS HE GLIMPSED THE YAWNING MOUTH OF THE SUBMARINE PEN

U-BOATS!

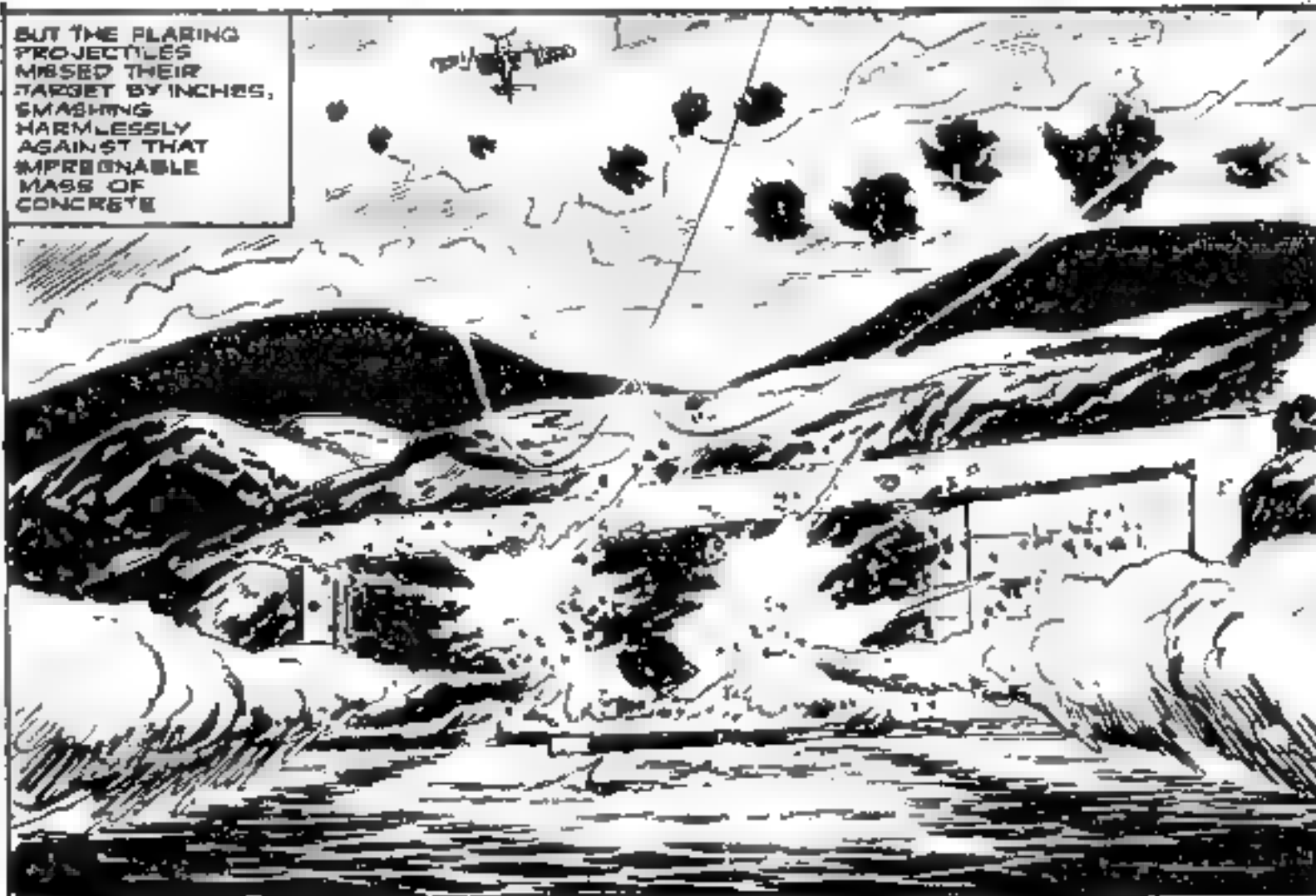


THEN HE REMEMBERED HE HAD BUT TWO ROCKETS LEFT

THERE WAS NO TIME FOR
CAREFUL AIM HE THUMPED
THE ROCKET RELEASE.



BUT THE FLARING
PROJECTILES
MISSED THEIR
TARGET BY INCHES,
SMASHING
HARMLESSLY
AGAINST THAT
IMPREGNABLE
MASS OF
CONCRETE



ANGRY WITH HIMSELF, JOHNNIE SWUNG CLEAR ONLY TO SEE THE FOLLOWING SALVO STRIKE SHORT INTO THE WATER



BUT WORSE WAS TO FOLLOW THE THIRD TYPHOON LIMPED OFF WITH A SHATTERED WING AND THE FOURTH HIT THE LOCK-GATES IN A BLINDING EXPLOSION



THE LAST TWO PILOTS WERE FLUNG OFF THEIR MARK AND THEIR ROCKETS SOARED OFF INTO EMPTY AIR



JOHNSIE GROANED IN DESPAIR,
FOR THE AGONISING FACT
HIT HIM LIKE AN ICE-COLD
SHOCK OF WATER

EVERY
ROCKET GONE
AND THE U-BOATS
AREN'T TOUCHED!
WE'VE
FAILED!

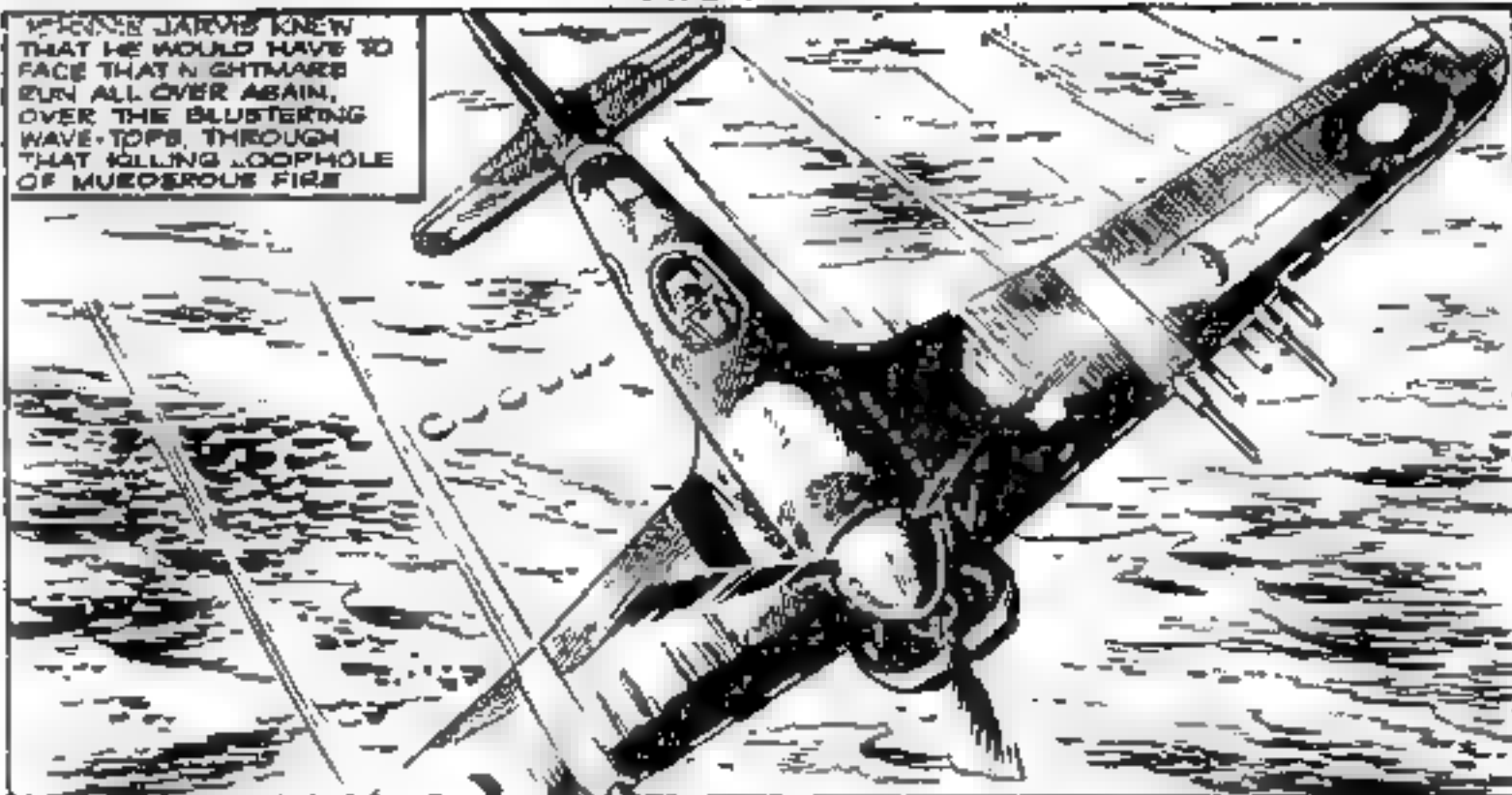
SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE...
SOMETHING DESPERATE...

HIGH OUT OF HARM'S WAY,
THE REST OF THE SQUADRON
STARED IN HORROR AS JOHNSIE'S
TYPHOON PLUNGED DOWN
AGAIN INTO THE CAULDRON
OF THE TARGET

WHAT'S
THAT CRAZY
JARVIS UP
TO NOW?

HE CAN'T
DO A THING
WITHOUT
ROCKETS!

JOHN JARVIS KNEW THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO FACE THAT NIGHTMARE RUN ALL OVER AGAIN, OVER THE BLUSTERING WAVE-TOPS, THROUGH THAT KILLING LOOPHOLE OF MURDEROUS FIRE.



SPRAY SMEARED JOHNNIE'S VISION, BULLETS THUDD AND TORE AT THE TYPHOON'S FRAME AND THE THUNDEROUS BELLOW OF THE POWERFUL MOTOR CRASHED AT HIS EARDRUMS.



NEXT INSTANT THE MOTOR CHECKED, COUGHED, AND PICKED UP ONCE MORE. BUT IN THAT SPLIT SECOND, THE TYPHOON HAD SCOOPED SEA WATER WITH ITS WING-TIP.



IT TOOK ALL THE PILOT'S STRENGTH TO WRENCH THE SHUDDERING PLANE INTO LEVEL FLIGHT AGAIN. THEN, MIRACULOUSLY, HE WAS THROUGH THE FEARSOME GAP



THE FOUR CANNONS
BEGAN TO HAMMER
DEFIANTLY

THE DARK, Gaping MAW OF THE PEN WAS LARGE IN THE TYPHOON'S SIGHTS - AND JOHNNIE SAW HIS SHOTS SLAMMING INTO IT.

THIS IS
IT - NOW OR
NEVER!

NEXT MOMENT A REFUELLING PONTON FLARED INTO A SHEET OF FLAME JOHNNIE HAD HIT ITS FUEL TANK...

AGH!

LOOK
OUT!

A BEARING ORANGE FLASH LIT THE DARKNESS OF THE CONCRETE CAVERN AS THE PONTOON BLEW UP TOUCHING OFF A REFUELLING HOSE A TORRENT OF LIQUID FIRE GUSHED INTO THE WATER...

MINNELL!

RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!

THEN A LARGER FUEL BOMBER BLEW UP, AND WHAT WAS FIRST A SCRAMBLE NOW BECAME A PANIC STRICKEN STAMPEDE



JOHNNIE HAD PLUNGED HIS PLANE SKYWARDS ONLY FEET FROM THE PEN AND BANKING ROUND, HE CAST A QUICK GLANCE BELOW

EXPLOSIVES MUST BE TORPEDOES GOING UP!

IT WAS SUCCESS FAR BEYOND HIS WILDEST HOPES...

THE BRIEF GLARE INSIDE THE SUBMARINE PEN SUDDENLY ERUPTED INTO A MIGHTY EXPLOSION AS THE MASSIVELY THICK ROOF SPLIT APART

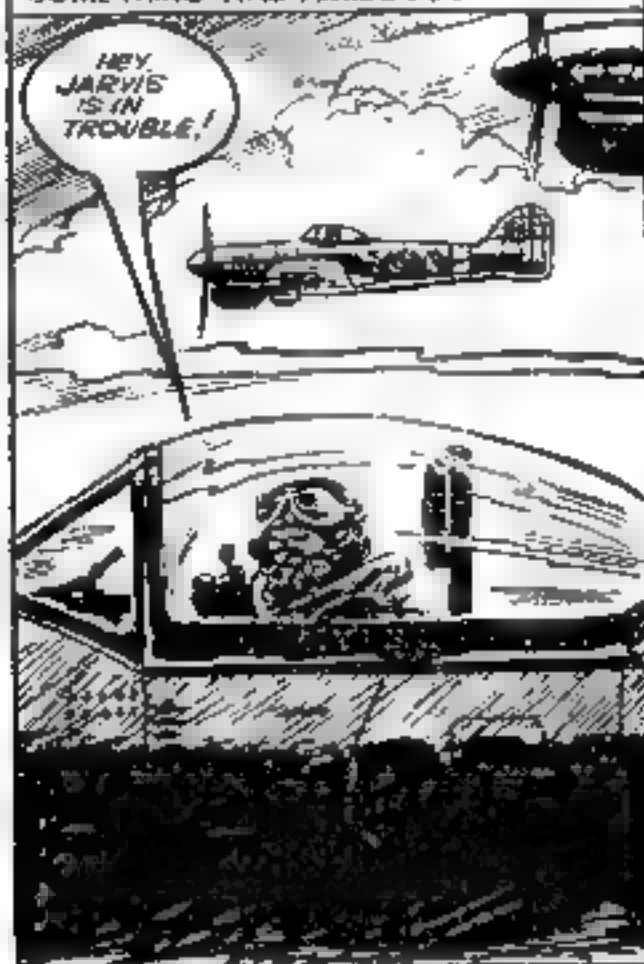


IN SOONER, THANKFUL RELIEF, JOHNNIE CLIMBED TO REJOIN HIS SQUADRON. THEN CAME AN OMINOUS CLATTER FROM BENEATH HIS ENGINE COWLING AND A STREAM OF SMOKE TRAILED FROM THE STUBBY EXHAUSTS.

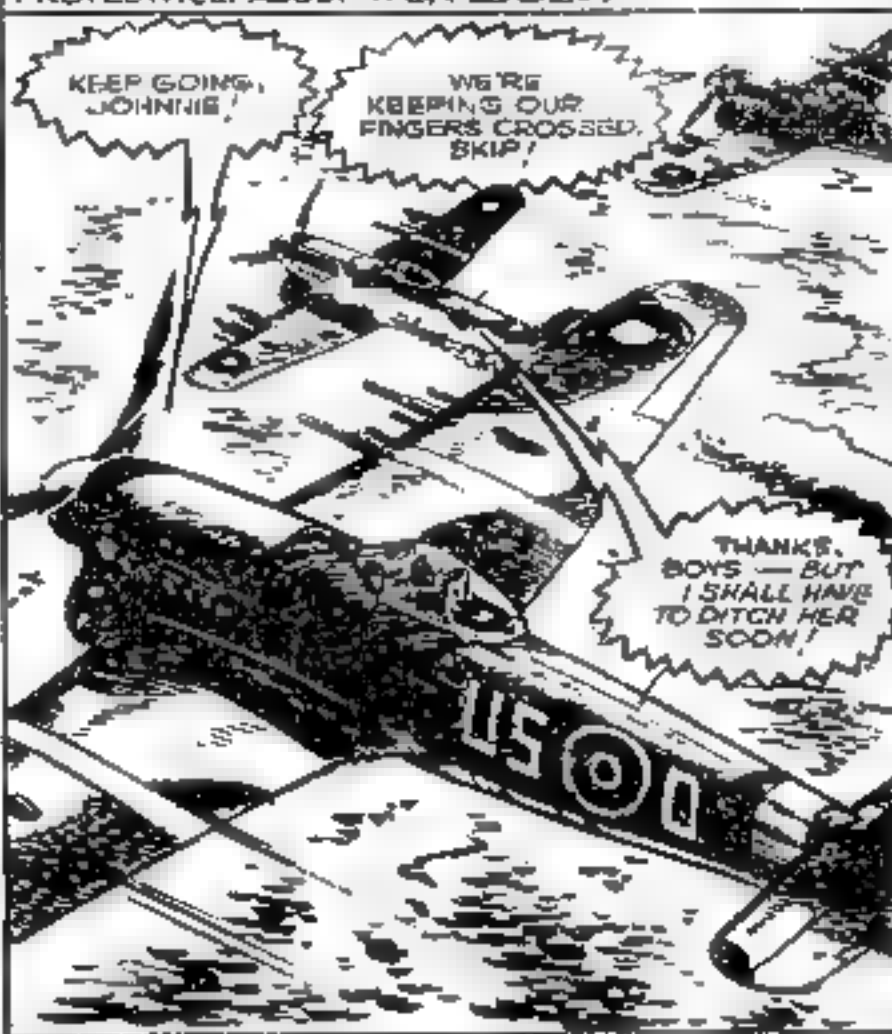


SEA WATER SCOOPED UP IN THAT PERILOUS RUN-UP WAS WREAKING HAVOC WITH THE TYPHOON'S ENGINE

THE CIRCLING SQUADRON HAD WATCHED JOHNNIE'S DARINGLY SUCCESSFUL ATTACK IN AWE AND IT WAS GRANT SCULLY WHO SENSED THAT SOMETHING WAS AMISS...



THE HARD-HEADED CANADIANS GATHERED PROTECTIVELY ABOUT THEIR LEADER.



THANKS, BOYS — BUT I SHALL HAVE TO DITCH HER SOON!

FOR SEVERAL MILES THEY CROWDED AROUND THE FAILING TYPHOON WHILE IT SANK LOWER AND LOWER TOWARDS THE HUNGRY WAVES.

THE SUBS WILL PICK ME UP. YOU CHAPS GET HOME... FUEL MUST BE GETTING SHORT

NIX. JOHNNIE WE'RE GONNER SEE YOU ON A SUB FIRST!



FIVE MORE MINUTES OF LIMPING FLIGHT AND JOHNNIE'S MOTOR COUGHED INTO A LAST AND FINAL SILENCE. HE CLAYED HIS WAY OUT OF THE COCKPIT AS THE FIGHTER BEGAN TO SPIN.



THOUGH THEY COULD IL. SPARE THE FUEL, GRANT SCULLY AND THE RES. WOULD NOT LEAVE UNTIL THEY HAD CONTACTED ONE OF THE SUBMARINES MARKING THE ROUTE BACK TO BASE.

SIGNAL MESSAGE UNDERSTOOD WILL PROCEED IMMEDIATELY.

AYE, SIR.



SATISFIED, THE SQUADRON RACED BACK TO REASSURE THEIR WAVE-SOAKED LEADER, HIS YELLOW LIFE-JACKET SHOWING CLEARLY AGAINST THE DARK SEA. THEN, IN FINAL SALUTE, THEY DIPPED THEIR WINGS AND TURNED FOR BASE.

YOU KNOW, HE'S QUITE A GUY! MAYBE WE WERE A BUNCH OF DUMB SOUR-PUSSES, FELLERS!

I RECKON YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING THERE, GRANT!



IT WAS LONELY FOR JOHN, I.E. IN THE WATER WHEN THEY HAD GONE BUT BEFORE LONG, HE HEARD THE DEEP THROB OF THE SUBMARINE'S ENGINES...

AHOY, THERE!

AH! MY PASSAGE HOME... THANKS, SCULLY!



WATCHING THE SLEEK LINES OF THE SUBMARINE PUSH TOWARDS HIM, JOHNNIE JARVIS AT LAST FELT THAT PEACE WHICH COMES WITH DIFFICULTIES FACED AND CONQUERED.

A WEEK LATER, ON THAT EPIC 6TH JUNE, 1944, SQUADRON LEADER JOHNNIE JARVIS WAS ABLE TO LOOK DOWN WITH AN EASY MIND ON THE GREATEST SEABORNE ASSAULT IN ALL HISTORY.



HIS SUPREMELY TOUGH TASK HAD PROVED TO BE THREE-FOLD — THE OVERCOMING OF HIS OWN FEARS, THE VANQUISHING OF PERSONAL ENMITY AND THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF A LURKING MENACE TO THE INVASION SHIPS BELOW. JOHNNIE JARVIS COULD NEVER MAKE UP HIS MIND WHICH OF THE THREE GAVE HIM THE BIGGEST KICK.

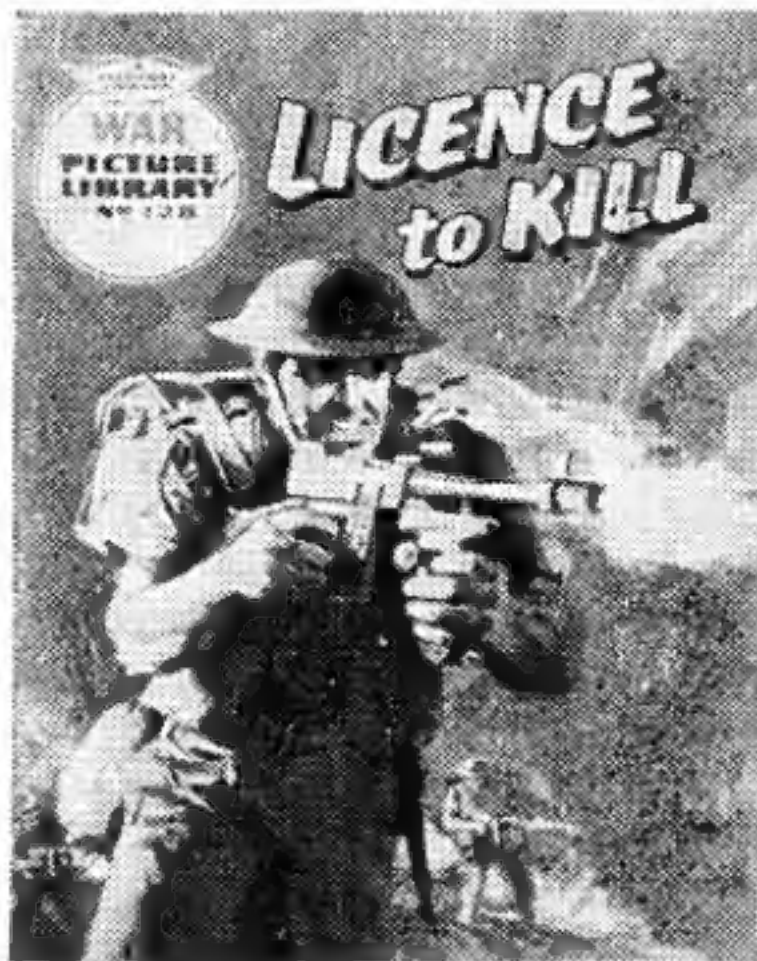
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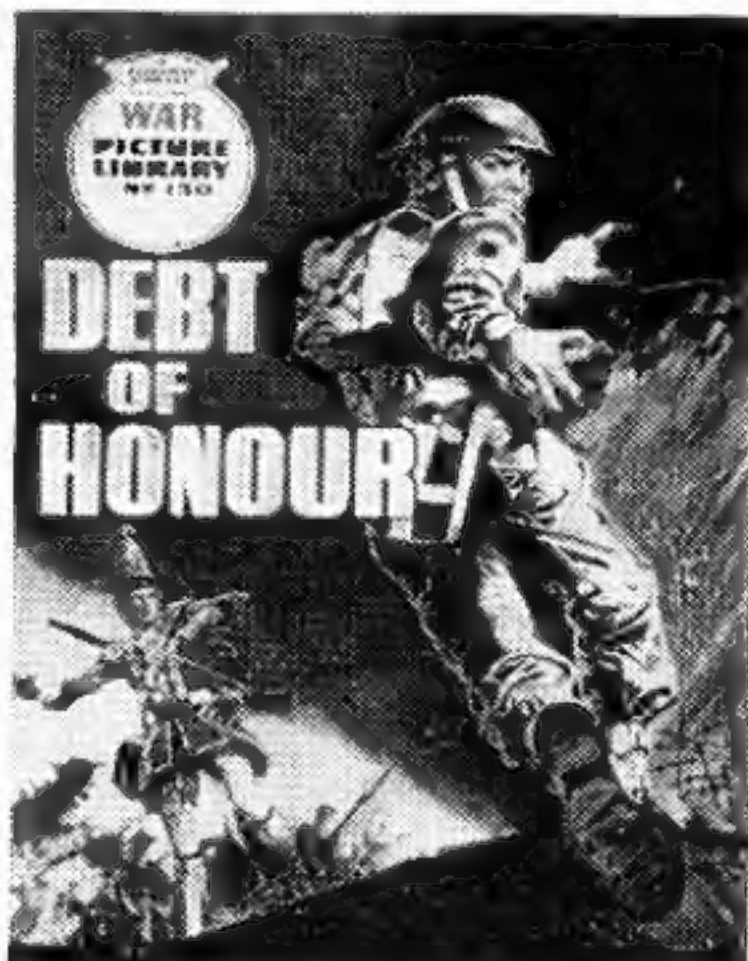
WAR PICTURE LIBRARY

No. 128.—LICENCE TO KILL

No. 130.—DEBT OF HONOUR



Only when the odds were stacked against him did he appreciate the burden of command.



The regiment had a dark stain on its history which could only be cleansed in the furnace-heat of combat.

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No. 131.—LINE OF FIRE

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